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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
GEOFFRY HAMLYN.
VOL. II.

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THE
RECOLLECTIONS
OF
GEOFFRY HAMLYN.

BY
HENRY KINGSLEY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE RECOLLECTIONS
OF
GEOFFRY HAMLYN.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PUFF OF THE SOUTH WIND.

A NEW heaven and a new earth! Tier beyond tier, height above height, the great wooded ranges go rolling away westward, till on the lofty sky-line they are crowned with a gleam of everlasting snow. To the eastward they sink down, breaking into isolated forests, fringed peaks, and rock-crowned eminences, till with rapidly straightening lines they disappear gradually into broad grey plains, beyond which the Southern Ocean is visible by the white reflection cast upon the sky.

All creation is new and strange. The trees, surpassing in size the largest English oaks, are of a species we have never seen before. The graceful

shrubs, the bright-coloured flowers, ay, the very grass itself, are of species unknown in Europe; while flaming lorics and brilliant parroquets fly whistling, not unmusically, through the gloomy forest, and over head in the higher fields of air, still lit up by the last rays of the sun, countless cockatoos wheel and scream in noisy joy, as we may see the gulls do about an English headland.

To the northward a great glen, sinking suddenly from the saddle on which we stand, stretches away in long vista, until it joins a broader valley, through which we can dimly see a full-fed river winding along in gleaming reaches, through level meadow land, interspersed with clumps of timber.

We are in Australia. Three hundred and fifty miles south of Sydney, on the great watershed which divides the Belloury from the Maryburnong, since better known as the Snowy-river of Gipps-land.

As the sun was going down on the scene I have been describing, James Stockbridge and I, Geoffry Hamlyn, reined up our horses on the ridge above-mentioned, and gazed down the long gully which lay stretched at our feet. Only the tallest trees stood with their higher boughs glowing with the gold of the departing day, and we stood undetermined which route to pursue, and half inclined to camp at the next waterhole we should see. We had lost some cattle, and among others a valuable imported bull, which we were very anxious to

recover. For five days we had been passing on from run to run, making inquiries without success, and were now fifty long miles from home in a southerly direction. We were beyond the bounds of all settlement; the last station we had been at was twenty miles to the north of us, and the occupiers of it, as they had told us the night before, had only taken up their country about ten weeks, and were as yet the furthest pioneers to the southward.

At this time Stockbridge and I had been settled in our new home about two years, and were beginning to get comfortable and contented. We had had but little trouble with the blacks, and, having taken possession of a fine piece of country, were flourishing and well to do.

We had never heard from home but once, and that was from Tom Troubridge, soon after our departure, telling us that if we succeeded he should follow, for that the old place seemed changed now we were gone. We had neither of us left any near relations behind us, and already we began to think that we were cut off for ever from old acquaintances and associations, and were beginning to be resigned to it.

Let us return to where he and I were standing alone in the forest. I dismounted to set right some strap or another, and, instead of getting on my horse again at once, stood leaning against him, looking at the prospect, glad to ease my legs for a time, for they were cramped with many hours' riding.

Stockbridge sat in his saddle immoveable and silent as a statue, and when I looked in his face I saw that his heart had travelled further than his eye could reach, and that he was looking far beyond the horizon that bounded his earthly vision, away to the pleasant old home which was home to us no longer.

"Jim," said I, "I wonder what is going on at Drumston now?"

"I wonder," he said softly.

A pause.

Below us, in the valley, a mob of jackasses were shouting and laughing uproariously, and a magpie was chanting his noble vesper hymn from a lofty tree.

"Jim," I began again, "do you ever think of poor little Mary now?"

"Yes, old boy, I do," he replied; "I can't help it; I was thinking of her then—I am always thinking of her, and, what's more, I always shall be. Don't think me a fool, old friend, but I love that girl as well now as ever I did. I wonder if she has married that fellow Hawker?"

"I fear there is but little doubt of it," I said; "try to forget her, James. Get in a rage with her, and be proud about it; you'll make all your life unhappy if you don't."

He laughed. "That's all very well, Jeff, but it's easier said than done.—Do you hear that? There are cattle down the gully."

There was some noise in the air, beside the evening rustle of the south wind among the tree-tops. Now it sounded like a far-off hubbub of waters, now swelled up harmonious, like the booming of cathedral bells across some rich old English valley on a still summer's afternoon.

"There are cattle down there, certainly," I said, "and a very large number of them; they are not ours, depend upon it: there are men with them, too, or they would not make so much noise. Can it be the blacks driving them off from the strangers we stayed with last night, do you think? If so, we had best look out for ourselves."

"Blacks could hardly manage such a large mob as there are there," said James. "I'll tell you what I think it is, old Jeff; it's some new chums going to cross the watershed, and look for new country to the south. If so, let us go down and meet them: they will camp down by the river yonder."

James was right. All doubt about what the new comers were was solved before we reached the river, for we could hear the rapid detonation of the stock-whips loud above the lowing of the cattle; so we sat and watched them debouche from the forest into the broad river meadows in the gathering gloom: saw the scene so venerable and ancient, so seldom seen in the Old World—the patriarchs moving into the desert with all their wealth, to find new pasture-ground. A simple primitive action, the first and simplest act of colonization,

yet producing such great results on the history of the world, as did the parting of Lot and Abraham in times gone by.

First came the cattle lowing loudly, some trying to stop and graze on the rich pasture after their long day's travel, some heading noisily towards the river, now beginning to steam with the rising evening mist. Now a lordly bull, followed closely by two favourite heifers, would try to take matters into his own hands, and cut out a route for himself, but is soon driven ignominiously back in a lumbering gallop by a quick-eyed stockman. Now a silly calf takes it into his head to go for a small excursion up the range, followed, of course, by his doting mother, and has to be headed in again, not without muttered wrath and lowerings of the head from madame. Behind the cattle came horsemen, some six or seven in number, and last, four drays, bearing the household gods, came crawling up the pass.

We had time to notice that there were women on the foremost dray, when it became evident that the party intended camping in a turn of the river just below. One man kicked his feet out of the stirrups, and, sitting loosely in his saddle, prepared to watch the cattle for the first few hours till he was relieved. Another lit a fire against a fallen tree, and while the bullock-drivers were busy unyoking their beasts, and the women were clambering from the dray, two of the horsemen separated from the others, and came forward to meet us.

Both of them I saw were men of vast stature. One rode upright, with a military seat, while his companion had his feet out of his stirrups, and rode loosely, as if tired with his journey. Further than this, I could distinguish nothing in the darkening twilight; but, looking at James, I saw that he was eagerly scanning the strangers, with elevated eyebrow and opened lips. Ere I could speak to him, he had dashed forward with a shout, and when I came up with him, wondering, I found myself shaking hands, talking and laughing, everything in fact short of crying, with Major Buckley and Thomas Troubridge."

"Range up alongside here, Jeff, you rascal," said Tom, "and let me get a fair hug at you. What do you think of this for a lark; eh?—to meet you out here, all promiscuous, in the forest, like Prince Arthur! We could not go out of our way to see you, though we knew where you were located, for we must hurry on and get a piece of country we have been told of on the next river. We are going to settle down close by you, you see. We'll make a new Drumston in the wilderness."

"This is a happy meeting, indeed, old Tom," I said, as we rode towards the drays, after the Major and James. "We shall have happy times, now we have got some of our old friends round us. Who is come with you? How is Mrs. Buckley?"

"Mrs. Buckley is as well as ever, and as handsome. My pretty little cousin, Mary Hawker, and old Miss Thornton, are with us; the poor old Vicar is dead."

"Mary Hawker with you?" I said. "And her husband, Tom?"

"Hardly, old friend. We travel in better company," said he. "George Hawker is transported for life."

"Alas! poor Mary," I answered. "And what for?"

"Coining," he answered. "I'll tell you the story another time. To-night let us rejoice."

I could not but watch James, who was riding before us, to see how he would take this news. The Major, I saw, was telling him all about it, but James seemed to take it quite quietly, only nodding his head as the other went on. I knew how he would feel for his old love, and I turned and said to Troubridge—

"Jim will be very sorry to hear of this. I wish she had married him."

"That's what we all say," said Tom. "I am sorry for poor Jim. He is about the best man I know, take him all in all. If that fellow were to die, she might have him yet, Hamlyn."

We reached the drays. There sat Mrs. Buckley on a log, a noble, happy matron, laughing at her son as he toddled about, busy gathering sticks for the fire. Beside her was Mary, paler and older-looking than when we had seen her last, with her child upon her lap, looking sad and worn. But a sadder sight for me was old Miss Thornton, silent and frightened, glancing uneasily round, as though expecting some new horror.

No child for her to cling to and strive for. No husband to watch for and anticipate every wish. A poor, timid, nervous old maid, thrown adrift in her old age upon a strange sea of anomalous wonders. Every old favourite prejudice torn up by the roots. All old formulas of life scattered to the winds!

She told me in confidence that evening that she had been in sad trouble all day. At dinner-time, some naked blacks had come up to the dray, and had frightened and shocked her. Then the dray had been nearly upset, and her hat crushed among the trees. A favourite and precious bag, which never left her, had been dropped in the water; and her Prayer-book, a parting gift from Lady Kate, had been utterly spoiled. A hundred petty annoyances and griefs, which Mary barely remarked, and which brave Mrs. Buckley, in her strong determination of following her lord to the ends of the earth, and of being as much help and as little incumbrance to him as she could, had laughed at, were to her great misfortunes. Why, the very fact, as she told me, of sitting on the top of a swinging jolting dray was enough to keep her in a continual state of agony and terror, so that when she alit at night, and sat down, she could not help weeping silently, dreading lest any one should see her.

Suddenly, Mary was by her side, kneeling down.

"Aunt," she said, "dearest aunt, don't break down.

It is all my wicked fault. You will break my heart, auntie dear, if you cry like that. Why did ever I bring you on this hideous journey?"

"How could I leave you in your trouble, my love?" said Miss Thornton. "You did right to come, my love. We are among old friends. We have come too far for trouble to reach us. We shall soon have a happy home again now, and all will be well."

So she, who needed so much comforting herself, courageously dried her tears and comforted Mary. And when we reached the drays, she was sitting with her hands folded before her in serene misery.

"Mary," said the Major, "here are two old friends."

He had no time to say more, for she, recognising Jim, sprang up, and, running to him, burst into hysterical weeping.

"Oh, my good old friend!" she cried; "oh, my dear old friend! Oh, to meet you here in this lonely wilderness! Oh, James, my kind old brother!"

I saw how his big heart yearned to comfort his old sweetheart in her distress. Not a selfish thought found place with him. He could only see his old love injured and abandoned, and nought more.

"Mary," he said, "what happiness to see you among all your old friends come to live among us again! It is almost too good to believe in. Believe me, you will get to like this country as well as old Devon

soon, though it looks so strange just now. And what a noble boy, too! We will make him the best bushman in the country when he is old enough."

So he took the child of his rival to his bosom, and when the innocent little face looked into his, he would see no likeness to George Hawker there. He only saw the mother's countenance as he knew her as a child years gone by.

"Is nobody going to notice me or my boy, I wonder?" said Mrs. Buckley. "Come here immediately, Mr. Stockbridge, before we quarrel."

In a very short time all our party were restored to their equanimity, and were laying down plans for pleasant meetings hereafter. And long after the women had gone to bed in the drays, and the moon was riding high in the heavens, James and myself, Troubridge and the Major, sat before the fire; and we heard, for the first time, of all that had gone on since we left England, and of all poor Mary's troubles. Then each man rolled himself in his blanket, and slept soundly under the rustling forest-boughs.

In the bright cool morning, ere the sun was up, and the belated opossum had run back to his home in the hollow log, James and I were afoot, looking after our horses. We walked silently side by side for a few minutes, until he turned and said:—

"Jeff, old fellow, of course you will go on with them, and stay until they are settled?"

“Jim, old fellow,” I replied, “of course you will go on with them, and stay till they are settled?”

He pondered a few moments, and then said, “Well, why not? I suppose she can be to me still what she always was? Yes, I will go with them.”

When we returned to the dray we found them all astir, preparing for a start. Mrs. Buckley, with her gown tucked up, was preparing breakfast, as if she had been used to the thing all her life. She had an imperial sort of way of manœuvring a frying-pan, which did one good to see. It is my belief, that if that woman had been called upon to groom a horse, she’d have done it in a ladylike way.

While James went among the party to announce his intention of going on with them, I had an opportunity of looking at the son and heir of all the Buckleys. He was a sturdy, handsome child about five years old, and was now standing apart from the others, watching a bullock-driver yoking-up his beast. I am very fond of children, and take great interest in studying their characters; so I stood, not unamused, behind this youngster, as he stood looking with awe and astonishment at the man, as he managed the great, formidable beasts, and brought each one into his place; not, however, without more oaths than one would care to repeat. Suddenly, the child, turning and seeing me behind him, came back, and took my hand.

“Why is he so angry with them?” the child asked at once. “Why does he talk to them like that?”

"He is swearing at them," I said, "to make them stand in their places."

"But they don't understand him," said the boy. "That black and white one would have gone where he wanted it in a minute; but it couldn't understand, you know; so he hit it over the nose. Why don't he find out how they talk to one another? Then he'd manage them much better. He is very cruel."

"He does not know any better," I said. "Come with me and get some flowers."

"Will you take me up?" he said; "I musn't run about for fear of snakes."

I took him up, and we went to gather flowers.

"Your name is Samuel Buckley, I think," said I.

"How did you know that?"

"I remember you when you were a baby," I said.

"I hope you may grow to be as good a man as your father, my lad. See, there is mamma calling for us."

"And how far south are you going, Major?" I asked at breakfast.

"No further than we can help," said the Major. "I stayed a night with my old friend Captain Brentwood, by the way; and there I found a man who knew of some unoccupied country down here, which he had seen in some bush expedition. We found the ground he mentioned taken up; but he says there is equally good on the next river. I have bought him and his information."

“ We saw good country away to the south yesterday,” I said. “ But are you wise to trust this man? Do you know anything about him?”

“ Brentwood has known him these ten years, and trusts him entirely ; though, I believe, he has been a convict. If you are determined to come with us, Stockbridge, I will call him up and examine him about the route. William Lee, just step here a moment.”

A swarthy and very powerfully built man came up. No other than the man I have spoken of under that name before. He was quite unknown either to James or myself, although, as he told us afterwards, he had recognised us at once, but kept out of our sight as much as possible, till by the Major's summons he was forced to come forward.

“ What route to-day, William?” asked the Major.

“ South and by east across the range. We ought to get down to the river by night if we're lucky.”

So, while the drays were getting under way, the Major, Tom, James, and myself rode up to the saddle where we had stood the night before, and gazed south-east across the broad prospect, in the direction that the wanderers were to go.

“ That,” said the Major, “ to the right there must be the great glen out of which the river comes ; and there, please God, we will rest our weary bodies and build our house. Odd, isn't it, that I should have been saved from shot and shell when so many better men were put away

in the trench, to come and end my days in a place like this? Well, I think we shall have a pleasant life of it, watching the cattle spread further across the plains year after year, and seeing the boy grow up to be a good man. At all events, for weal or woe, I have said good bye to old England, for ever and a day."

The cattle were past, and the drays had arrived at where we stood. With many a hearty farewell, having given a promise to come over and spend Christmas-day with them, I turned my horse's head homewards and went on my solitary way.

CHAPTER II.

I HIRE A NEW HORSEBREAKER.

I MUST leave them to go their way towards their new home, and follow my own fortunes a little, for that afternoon I met with an adventure quite trifling indeed, but which is not altogether without interest in this story.

I rode on till high noon, till having crossed the valley of the Belloury, and followed up one of its tributary creeks, I had come on to the water system of another main river, and the rapid widening of the gully whose course I was pursuing assured me that I could not be far from the main stream itself. At length I entered a broad flat, intersected by a deep and tortuous creek, and here I determined to camp till the noon-day heat was past, before I continued my journey, calculating that I could easily reach home the next day.

Having watered my horse, I turned him loose for a graze, and, making such a dinner as was possible under the circumstances, I lit a pipe and lay down on the long grass, under the flowering wattle-trees, smoking and watching the manœuvres of a little tortoise, who was dis-

porting himself in the waterhole before me. Getting tired of that I lay back on the grass, and watched the green leaves waving and shivering against the clear blue sky, given up entirely to the greatest of human enjoyments—the after dinner-pipe, the pipe of peace.

Which is the pleasantest pipe in the day? We used to say at home that a man should smoke but four pipes a-day: the matutinal, another I don't specify, the post-prandial, and the symposial or convivial, which last may be infinitely subdivided, according to the quantity of drink taken. But in Australia this division won't obtain, particularly when you are on the tramp. Just when you wake from a dreamless sleep beneath the forest boughs, as the east begins to blaze, and the magpie gets musical, you dash to the embers of last night's fire, and after blowing many fire-sticks find one which is alight, and proceed to send abroad on the morning breeze the scent of last night's dottle. Then, when breakfast is over and the horses are caught up and saddled, and you are jogging across the plain, with the friend of your heart beside you, the burnt incense once more goes up, and conversation is unnecessary. At ten o'clock when you cross the creek (you always cross a creek about ten if you are in a good country), you halt and smoke. So after dinner in the lazy noon-tide, one or perhaps two pipes are necessary, with, perhaps, another about four in the afternoon, and last, and perhaps best of all, are the three or four you smoke before the fire at night, when the day is dying

and the opossums are beginning to chatter in the twilight. So that you find that a fig of Barret's twist, seventeen to the pound, is gone in the mere hours of day-light without counting such a casualty as waking up cold in the night, and going at it again.

So I lay on my back dreaming, wondering why a locust who was in full screech close by, took the trouble to make that terrible row when it was so hot, and hoping that his sides might be sore with the exertion, when to my great astonishment I heard the sound of feet brushing through the grass towards me. "Black fellow," I said to myself; but no, those were shodden feet that swept along so wearily. I raised myself on my elbow, with my hand on my pistol, and reconnoitred.

There approached me from down the creek a man, hardly reaching the middle size, lean and active-looking, narrow in the flanks, thin in the jaws, his knees well apart; with a keen bright eye in his head; his clothes looked as if they had belonged to ten different men; and his gait was heavy, and his face red, as if from a long hurried walk; but I said at once, "Here comes a riding man, at all events, be it for peace or war."

"Good day, lad," said I.

"Good day, sir."

"You're rather off the tracks for a foot-man;" said I.
"Are you looking for your horse?"

"Deuce a horse have I got to my name, sir,—have you got a feed of anything? I'm nigh starved."

"Ay, surely: the tea's cold; put it on the embers and warm it a bit; here's beef, and damper too, plenty."

I lit another pipe and watched his meal. I like feeding a real hungry man; it's almost as good as eating one-self—sometimes better.

When the edge of his appetite was taken off he began to talk; he said first—

"Got a station anywheres about here, sir?"

"No, I'm Hamlyn of the Durnongs, away by Maneroo."

"Oh! ay; I know you, sir; which way have you come this morning?"

"Southward; I crossed the Belloury about seven o'clock."

"That, indeed! You haven't seen anything of three bullock drays and a mob of cattle going south?"

"Yes! I camped with such a lot last night!"

"Not Major Buckley's lot?"

"The same."

"And how far were they on?"

"They crossed the range at daylight this morning;—they're thirty miles away by now."

He threw his hat on the ground with an oath: "I shall never catch them up. I daren't cross that range on foot into the new country, and those black devils lurking round. He shouldn't have left me like that;—all my own fault, though, for staying behind! No, no, he's true enough—all my own fault. But I wouldn't have left him

so, neither; but, perhaps, he don't think I'm so far behind."

I saw that the man was in earnest, for his eyes were swimming;—he was too dry for tears; but though he looked a desperate scamp, I couldn't help pitying him and saying,—

"You seem vexed you couldn't catch them up; were you going along with the Major, then?"

"No, sir; I wasn't hired with him; but an old mate of mine, Bill Lee, is gone along with him to show him some country, and I was going to stick to him and see if the Major would take me; we haven't been parted for many years, not Bill and I haven't; and the worst of it is, that he'll think I've slipped away from him, instead of following him fifty mile on foot to catch him. Well! it can't be helped now; I must look round and get a job somewhere till I get a chance to join him. Were you travelling with them, sir?"

"No, I'm after some cattle I've lost; a fine imported bull, too,—worse luck! We'll never see him again, I'm afraid, and if I do find them how I am to get them home single handed, I don't know."

"Do you mean, a short-horned Durham bull with a key brand? Why, if that's him, I can lay you on to him at once; he's up at Jamieson's, here to the west. I was staying at Watson's last night, and one of Jamieson's men staid in the hut—a young hand; and, talking about beasts, he said that there was a fine short-horned

bull come on to their run with a mob of heifers and cows, and they couldn't make out who they belonged to; they were all different brands."

"That's our lot for a thousand," says I; "a lot of store cattle we bought this year from the Hunter, and haven't branded yet,—more shame to us."

"If you could get a horse and saddle from Jamieson's, sir," said he, "I could give you a hand home with them: I'd like to get a job somehow, and I'm well used to cattle."

"Done with you," said I; "Jamieson's isn't ten miles from here, and we can do that to-night if we look sharp. Come along, my lad."

So I caught up the horse, and away we went. Starting at right angles with the sun, which was nearly overhead, and keeping to the left of him—holding such a course, as he got lower, that an hour and half, or thereabouts, before setting he should be in my face, and at sundown a little to the left;—the best direction I can give you for going about due west in November, without a compass—which, by the way, you always ought to have.

My companion was foot-sore, so I went slowly; he, however, shambled along bravely when his feet got warm. He was a talkative, lively man, and chattered continually.

"You've got a nice place up at the Durnongs, sir," said he; "I stayed in your huts one night. It's the

comfortablest bachelor station on this side. You've got a smart few sheep, I expect?"

"Twenty-five thousand. Do you know these parts well?"

"I knew that country of yours long before any of it was took up."

"You've been a long while in the country, then?"

"I was sent out when I was eighteen; spared, as the old judge said, on account of my youth: that's eleven years ago."

"Spared, eh? It was something serious, then?"

"Trifling enough: only for having a rope in my hand."

"They wouldn't lag a man for that," said I.

"Ay, but," he replied, "there was a horse at the end of the rope. I was brought up in a training stable, and somehow there's something in the smell of a stable is sure to send a man wrong if he don't take care. I got betting and drinking, too, as young chaps will, and lost my place, and got from bad to worse till I shook a nag, and got bowled out and lagged. That's about my history, sir; will you give me a job, now?" and he looked up, laughing.

"Ay, why not?" said I. "Because you tried hard to go to the devil when you were young and foolish, it don't follow that you should pursue that line of conduct all your life. You've been in a training stable, eh? If you can break horses, I may find you something to do."

"I'll break horses against any man in this country—though that's not saying much, for I ain't seen not what I call a breaker since I've been here; as for riding, I'd ridden seven great winners before I was eighteen; and that's what ne'er a man alive can say. Ah, those were the rosy times! Ah for old Newmarket!"

"Are you a Cambridgeshire man, then?"

"Me? Oh, no; I'm a Devonshire man. I come near from where Major Buckley lived some years. Did you notice a pale, pretty-looking woman, was with him—Mrs. Hawker?"

I grew all attention. "Yes," I said, "I noticed her."

"I knew her husband well," he said, "and an awful rascal he was: he was lagged for coining, though he might have been for half-a-dozen things besides."

"Indeed!" said I; "and is he in the colony?"

"No; he's over the water, I expect."

"In Van Diemen's Land, you mean?"

"Just so," he said; "he had better not show Bill Lee much of his face, or there'll be mischief."

"Lee owes him a grudge, then?"

"Not exactly that," said my communicative friend, "but I don't think that Hawker will show much where Lee is."

"I am very glad to hear it," I thought to myself. "I hope Mary may not have some trouble with her husband still."

"What is the name of the place Major Buckley comes from?" I inquired.

"Drumston."

"And you belong there too?" I knew very well however, that he did not, or I must have known him."

"No," he answered; "Okchampton is my native place. But you talk a little Devon yourself, sir."

The conversation came to a close, for we heard the barking of dogs, and saw the station where we were to spend the night. In the morning I went home, and my new acquaintance, who called himself Dick, along with me. Finding that he was a first-rate rider, and gentle and handy among horses, I took him into my service permanently, and soon got to like him very well.

CHAPTER III.

A WARM CHRISTMAS DAY.

ALL through November and part of December, I and our Scotch overseer, Georgy Kyle, were busy as bees among the sheep. Shearers were very scarce, and the poor sheep got fearfully "tomahawked" by the new hands, who had been a very short time from the barracks. Dick, however, my new acquaintance, turned out a valuable ally, getting through more sheep and taking off his fleece better than any man in the shed. The prisoners, of course, would not work effectually without extra wages, and thus gave a deal of trouble; knowing that there was no fear of my sending them to the magistrat (fifty miles off) during such a busy time. However, all evils must come to an end some time or another, and so did shearing, though it was nearly Christmas before our wool was pressed and ready for the drays.

Then came a breathing time. So I determined, having heard nothing of James, to go over and spend my Christmas with the Buckleys, and see how they

were getting on at their new station ; and about noon on the day before Boxing-day, having followed the track made by their drays from the place I had last parted with them, I reined up on the cliffs above a noble river, and could see their new huts, scarce a quarter of a mile off, on the other side of the stream.

They say that Christmas-day is the hottest day in the year in those countries, but some days in January are, I think, generally hotter. To-day, however, was as hot as a salamander could wish. All the vast extent of yellow plain to the eastward quivered beneath a fiery sky, and every little eminence stood like an island in a lake of mirage. Used as I had got to this phenomenon, I was often tempted that morning to turn a few hundred yards from my route, and give my horse a drink at one of the broad glassy pools that seemed to lie right and left. Once the faint track I was following headed straight towards one of these apparent sheets of water, and I was even meditating a bathe, but, lo ! when I was a hundred yards or so off, it began to dwindle and disappear, and I found nothing but the same endless stretch of grass, burnt up by the midsummer sun.

For many miles I had distinguished the new huts, placed at the apex of a great cape of the continent of timber which ran down from the mountains into the plains. I thought they had chosen a strange place for their habitation, as there appeared no signs of a water-course near it. It was not till I pulled up within a

quarter of a mile of my destination, that I heard a hoarse roar as if from the bowels of the earth, and found that I was standing on the edge of a glen about four hundred feet deep, through which a magnificent snow-fed river poured ceaselessly, here flashing bright among bars of rock, there lying in dark, deep reaches, under tall, white-stemmed trees.

The scene was so beautiful and novel that I paused and gazed at it. Across the glen, behind the houses, rolled up a dark mass of timbered ranges, getting higher and steeper as far as the eye could reach, while to the north-east the river's course might be traced by the timber that fringed the water's edge, and sometimes feathered some tributary gully almost to the level of the flat lofty table-land. On either side of it, down behind, down folded one over the other, and, bordered by great forests, led the eye towards the river's source, till the course of the valley could no longer be distinguished, lost among the distant ranges; but above where it had disappeared, rose a tall blue peak with streaks of snow.

I rode down a steep pathway, and crossed a broad gravelly ford. As my horse stopped to drink, I looked delighted up the vista which opened on my sight. The river, partly over-shadowed by tall trees, was hurrying and spouting through upright columns of basalt, which stood in groups everywhere like the pillars of a ruined city; in some places solitary, in others, clustered

together like fantastic buildings, while a hundred yards above was an island, dividing the stream, on which, towering above the variety of low green shrubs which covered it, three noble fern trees held their plumes aloft, shaking with the concussion of the falling water.

I crossed the river. A gully, deep at first, but getting rapidly shallower, led up by a steep ascent to the table-land above, and as I reached the summit I found myself at Major Buckley's front door. They had, with good taste, left such trees as stood near the house—a few deep-shadowed light-woods and black wattles, which formed pretty groups in what I could see was marked out for a garden. Behind, the land began to rise, at first, in park-like timbered forest glades, and further back, closing into dense deep woodlands.

“What a lovely place they will make of this in time!” I said to myself; but I had not much time for cogitation. A loud, cheerful voice shouted: “Hamlyn, you are welcome to Baroona!” and close to me I saw the Major, carrying his son and heir in his arms, advancing to meet me from the house-door.

“You are welcome to Baroona!” echoed the boy; “and a merry Christmas and a happy New-year to you!”

I went into the house and was delighted to find what a change a few weeks of busy, quiet, and *home* had made in the somewhat draggle-tailed and disconsolate troop that

I had parted with on their road. Miss Thornton, with her black mittens, white apron, and spectacles, had found herself a cool corner by the empty fire-place, and was stitching away happily at baby linen. Mrs. Buckley, in the character of a duchess, was picking raisins, and Mary was helping her; and, as I entered, laughing loudly, they greeted me kindly with all the old sacred good wishes of the season.

"I very much pity you, Mr. Hamlyn," said Mrs. Buckley, "at having outlived the novelty of being scorched to death on Christmas-day. My dear husband, please refresh me with reading the thermometer!"

"One hundred and nine in the shade," replied the Major, with a chuckle.

"Ah, dear!" said Mrs. Buckley, "If the dear old rheumatic creatures from the alms-house at Clere could only spend to-morrow with us, how it would warm their old bones! Fancy how they are crouching before their little pinched grates just now!"

"Hardly that, Mrs. Buckley," I said laughing; "they are all snug in bed now. It is three o'clock in the morning, or thereabouts, at home, you must remember. Miss Thornton, I hope you have got over your journey."

"Yes, and I can laugh at all my mishaps now," she replied; "I have just got homely and comfortable here, but we must make one more move, and that will be the last for me. Mary and Mr. Troubridge have

taken up their country to the south-west, and as soon as he has got our house built, we are going to live there."

"It is not far, I hope," said I.

"A trifle: not more than ten miles," said Miss Thornton; "they call the place Toonarbin. Mary's run joins the Major's on two sides, and beyond again, we already have neighbours, the Mayfords. They are on the river again; but we are on a small creek towards the ranges. I should like to have been on the river, but they say we are very lucky."

"I am so glad to see you," said Mary; "James Stockbridge said you would be sure to come; otherwise, we should have sent over for you. What do you think of my boy?"

She produced him from an inner room. He was certainly a beautiful child, though very small, and with a certain painful likeness to his father, which even I could see, and I could not help comparing him unfavourably, in my own mind, with that noble six-year-old Sam Buckley, who had come to my knee where I sat, and was looking in my face as if to make a request.

"What is it, my prince?" I asked.

He blushed, and turned his handsome gray eyes to a silver-handled riding-whip that I had in my hand "I'll take such care of it," he whispered, and, having got it, was soon astride of a stick, full gallop for Banbury Cross.

James and Troubridge came in. To the former I had much to tell that was highly satisfactory about our shearing; and from the latter I had much to hear about the state of both the new stations, and the adventures of a journey he had had back towards Sydney to fetch up his sheep. But these particulars will be but little interesting to an English reader, and perhaps still less so to an Australian. I am writing a history of the people themselves, not of their property. I will only say, once for all, that the Major's run contained very little short of 60,000 acres of splendidly grassed plain-land, which he took up originally with merely a few cattle, and about 3,000 sheep; but which, in a few years, carried 28,000 sheep comfortably. Mrs. Hawker and Troubridge had quite as large a run; but a great deal of it was rather worthless forest, badly grassed; which Tom, in his wisdom, like a great many other new chums, had thought superior to the bleak plains on account of the shelter. Yet, notwithstanding this disadvantage, they were never, after a year or two, with less than 15,000 sheep, and a tolerable head of cattle. In short, in a very few years, both the Major and Troubridge, by mere power of accumulation, became very wealthy people.

Christmas morn rose bright; but ere the sun had time to wreak his fury upon us every soul in the household was abroad, under the shade of the lightwood trees, to hear the Major read the Litany.

A strange group we were. The Major stood with his back against a tree-stem, and all his congregation were ranged around him. To his right stood Miss Thornton, her arms folded placidly before her; and with her, Mary and Mrs. Buckley, in front of whom sat the two boys: Sam, the elder, trying to keep Charles, the younger, quiet. Next, going round the circle, stood the old housekeeper, servant of the Buckleys for thirty years; who now looked askance off her Prayer-book to see that the two convict women under her charge were behaving with decorum. Next, and exactly opposite the Major, were two free servants: one a broad, brawny, athletic-looking man, with, I thought, not a bad countenance; and the other a tall, handsome, foolish-looking Devonshire lad. The round was completed by five convict man-servants, standing vacantly looking about them; and Tom, James, and myself, who were next the Major.

The service, which he read in a clear manly voice, was soon over, and we returned to the house in groups. I threw myself in the way of the two free servants, and asked,—

“Pray, which of you is William Lee?”—for I had forgotten him.

The short thickset man I had noticed before touched his hat and said that he was. That touching of the hat is a very rare piece of courtesy from working men in Australia. The convicts are forced to do it, and so the free men make it a point of honour not to do so.

“Oh!” said I, “I have got a groom who calls himself Dick. I found him sorefooted in the bush the day I met the Major. He was trying to pick you up. He asked me to tell you that he was afraid to cross the range alone on account of the blacks, or he would have come up with you. He seemed anxious lest you should think it was his fault.”

“Poor chap!” said Lee. “What a faithful little fellow it is! Would it be asking a liberty if you would take back a letter for me, sir?”

I said, “No; certainly not.”

“I am much obliged to you, sir,” he said. “I am glad Dick has got with *a gentleman*.”

That letter was of some importance to me, though I did not know it till after, but I may as well say why now. Lee had been a favourite servant of my father’s, and when he got into trouble my father had paid a counsel to defend him. Lee never forgot this, and this letter to Dick was shortly to the effect that I was one of the *right sort*, and was to be taken care of, which injunction Dick obeyed to the very letter, doing me services for pure good will, which could not have been bought for a thousand a-year.

After breakfast arose the question, “What is to be done?” Which Troubridge replied to by saying: “What could any sensible man do such weather as this, but get into the water and stop there?”

“Shall it be, ‘All hands to bathe,’ then?” said the Major.

“You won’t be without company,” said Mrs. Buckley, “for the black fellows are camped in the bend, and they spend most of their time in the water such a day as this.”

So James and Troubridge started for the river with their towels, the Major and I promising to follow them immediately, for I wanted to look at my horse, and the Major had also something to do in the paddock. So we walked together.

“Major,” said I, when we had gone a little way, “do you never feel anxious about Mary Hawker’s husband appearing and giving trouble?”

“Oh, no!” said he. “The man is safe in Van Diemen’s Land. Besides, what could he gain? I, for one, without consulting her, should find means to pack him off again. There is no fear.”

“By the bye, Major,” I said, “have you heard from our friend Doctor Mulhaus since your arrival? I suppose he is at Drumston still?”

“Oh dear, no!” said he. “He is gone back to Germany. He is going to settle there again. He was so sickened of England when all his friends left, that he determined to go home. I understood that he had some sort of patrimony there, on which he will end his days. Wherever he goes, God go with him, for he is a noble fellow!”

“Amen,” I answered. And soon after, having got towels, we proceeded to the river; making for a long reach a little below where I had crossed the night before.

“Look there!” said the Major. “There’s a bit for one of your painters! I wish Wilkie or Martin were here.”

I agreed with him. Had Etty been on the spot he would have got a hint for one of his finest pictures; though I can give but little idea of it in writing, however, let me try. Before us was a long reach of deep, still water, unbroken by a ripple, so hemmed in on all sides by walls of deep green black wattle, tea-tree, and delicate silver acacia, that the water seemed to flow in a deep shoreless rift of the forest, above which the taller forest trees towered up two hundred feet, hiding the lofty cliffs, which had here receded a little back from the river.

The picture had a centre, and a strange one. A little ledge of rock ran out into deep water, and upon it, rising from a heap of light-coloured clothing, like a white pillar, in the midst of the sombre green foliage, rose the naked carcass of Thomas Troubridge, Esq., preparing for a header, while at his feet were grouped three or four black fellows, one of whom as we watched slid off the rock like an otter. The reach was covered with black heads belonging to the savages, who were swimming in all directions, while groups of all ages and both sexes stood about on the bank in Mother Nature’s full dress.

We had a glorious bathe, and then sat on the rock, smoking, talking, and watching the various manœuvres

of the blacks. An old lady, apparently about eighty, with a head as white as snow, topping her black body (a flourbag cobbler, as her tribe would call her), was punting a canoe along in the shallow water on the opposite side of the river. She was entirely without clothes, and in spite of her decrepitude stood upright in the cockleshell, handling it with great dexterity. When she was a little above us, she made way on her barque, and shot into the deep water in the middle of the stream, evidently with the intention of speaking us. As, however, she was just half-way across, floating helplessly, unable to reach the bottom with the spear she had used as a puntpole in the shallower water, a mischievous black imp canted her over, and souse she went into the river. It was amazing to see how boldly and well the old woman struck out for the shore, keeping her white head well out of the water; and, having reached dry land once more, sat down on her haunches, and began scolding with a volubility and power which would soon have silenced the loudest tongue in old Billingsgate.

Her anger, so far from wearing out, grew on what fed it; so that her long-drawn yells, which seemed like parentheses in her jabbering discourse, were getting each minute more and more acute, and we were just thinking about moving homewards, when a voice behind us sang out,—

“Hallo, Major! Having a little music, eh? What

a sweet song that old girl is singing! I must write it down from dictation, and translate it, as Walter Scott used to do with the old wives' ballads in Scotland."

"I have no doubt it would be quite Ossianic—equal to any of the abusive scenes in Homer. But, my dear Harding, how are you? You are come to eat your Christmas dinner with us, I hope?"

"That same thing, Major," answered the new comer. "Trounbridge and Stockbridge, how are you? This, I presume, is your partner, Hamlyn?"

We went back to the house. Harding, I found, was half-owner of a station to the north-east, an Oxford man, a great hand at skylarking, and an inveterate writer of songs. He was good-looking too, and gentleman-like, in fact, a very pleasant companion in every way.

Dinner was to be at six o'clock, in imitation of home hours; but we did not find the day hang heavy on our hands, there was so much to be spoken of by all of us. And when that important meal was over we gathered in the open air in front of the house, bent upon making Christmas cheer.

"What is your last new song, eh, Harding?" said the Major; "now is the time to ventilate it."

"I've been too busy shearing for song-writing, Major."

Soon after this we went in, and there we sat till nearly ten o'clock, laughing, joking, singing, and drinking punch. Mary sat between James Stockbridge and

Tom, and they three spoke together so exclusively and so low, that the rest of us were quite forgotten. Mary was smiling and laughing, first at one and then at the other, in her old way, and now and then as I glanced at her I could hardly help sighing. But I soon remembered certain resolutions I had made, and tried not to notice the trio, but to make myself agreeable to the others. Still my eyes wandered towards them again intuitively. I thought Mary had never looked so beautiful before. Her complexion was very full, as though she were blushing at something one of them had said to her, and while I watched I saw James rise and go to a jug of flowers, and bring back a wreath of scarlet *Kennedia*, saying :—

“Do us a favour on Christmas night, Mary ; twine this in your hair.”

She blushed deeper than before, but she did it, and Tom helped her. There was no harm in that, you say, for was he not her cousin? But still I could not help saying to myself, “Oh Mary, Mary, if you were a widow, how long would you stay so?”

“What a gathering it is, to be sure!” said Mrs. Buckley!—“all the old Drumstonians who are alive collected under one roof.”

“Except the Doctor,” said the Major.

“Ah, yes, dear Doctor Mulhaus. I am so sad sometimes to think that we shall never see him again.”

"I miss him more than any one," said the Major. "I have no one to contradict me now."

"I shall have to take that duty upon me, then," said his wife. "Hark! there is Lee come back from the sheep station. Yes, that must be his horse. Call him in and give him a glass of grog. I was sorry to send him out to-day."

"He is coming to make his report," said Mrs. Buckley; "there is his heavy tramp outside the door."

The door was opened, and the new comer advanced to where the glare of the candles fell full upon his face.

Had the Gentleman in Black himself advanced out of the darkness at that moment, with his blue bag on his arm and his bundle of documents in his hand, we should not have leapt to our feet and cried out more suddenly than we did then. For Doctor Mulhaus stood in the middle of the room, looking around him with a bland smile.

CHAPTER IV.

JIM STOCKBRIDGE BEGINS TO TAKE ANOTHER VIEW OF MATTERS.

HE stood in the candle-light, smiling blandly, while we all stayed for an instant, after our first exclamation, speechless with astonishment.

The Major was the first who showed signs of consciousness, for I verily believe that one half of the company at least believed him to be a ghost. "You are the man," said the Major, "who in the flesh called himself Maximilian Mulhaus! Why are you come to trouble us, O spirit?—not that we shouldn't be glad to see you if you were alive, you know, but—my dear old friend, how are you?"

Then we crowded round him, all speaking at once and trying to shake hands with him. Still he remained silent, and smiled. I, looking into his eyes, saw that they were swimming, and divined why he would not trust himself to speak. No one hated a show of emotion more than the Doctor, and yet his brave warm heart would often flood his eyes in spite of himself.

He walked round to the fire-place, and, leaning against the board that answered for a chimney-piece, stood

looking at us with beaming eyes, while we anxiously waited for him to speak.

"Ah!" he said at length, with a deep sigh, "this does me good. I have not made my journey in vain. A man who tries to live in this world without love must, if he is not a fool, commit suicide in a year. I went to my own home, and my own dogs barked at me. Those I had raised out of the gutter, and set on horse-back, splashed mud on me as I walked. I will go back, I said, to the little English family who loved and respected me for my own sake, though they be at the ends of the earth. So I left those who should have loved me with an ill-concealed smile on their faces, and when I come here I am welcomed with tears of joy from those I have not known five years. Bah! Here is my home, Buckley: let me live and die with you."

"Live!" said the Major—"ay, while there's a place to live in; don't talk about dying yet, though,—we'll think of that presently. I can't find words enough to give him welcome. Wife, can you?"

"Not I, indeed," she said; "and what need? He can see a warmer welcome in our faces than an hour's clumsy talk could give him. I say, Doctor, you are welcome, now and for ever. Will that serve you, husband?"

I could not help looking at Miss Thornton. She sat silently staring at him through it all, with her hands clasped together, beating them upon her knee. Now,

when all was quiet, and Mrs. Buckley and Mary had run off to the kitchen to order the Doctor some supper, he seemed to see her for the first time, and bowed profoundly. She rose, and, looking at him intently, sat down again.

The Doctor had eaten his supper, and Mrs. Buckley had made him something to drink with her own hands ; the Doctor had lit his pipe, and we had gathered round the empty fire-place, when the Major said,—

“Now, Doctor, do tell us your adventures, and how you have managed to drop upon us from the skies on Christmas-day.”

“Soon told, my friend,” he answered. “See here. I went back to Germany because all ties in England were broken. I went to Lord C—— : I said, ‘I will go back and see the palingenesis of my country; I will see what they are doing, now the French are in the dust.’ He said, ‘Go, and God speed you!’ I went. What did I find? Beggars on horseback everywhere, riding post-haste to the devil—not as good horsemen, either, but as tailors of Brentford, and crowding one another into the mud to see who would be there first. ‘Let me get out of this before they ride over me,’ said I. So I came forth to England, took ship, and here I am.”

“A most lucid and entirely satisfactory explanation of what you have been about, I must say,” answered the Major; “however, I must be content.”

At this moment, little Sam, who had made his escape

in the confusion, came running in, breathless. "Papa! papa!" said he, "Lee has come home with a snake seven feet long." Lee was at the door with the reptile in his hand—a black snake, with a deep salmon-coloured belly, deadly venomous, as I knew. All the party went out to look at it, except the Doctor and Miss Thornton, who stayed at the fire-place.

"Mind your hands, Lee!" I heard James say; "though the brute is dead, you might prick your fingers with him."

I was behind all the others, waiting to look at the snake, which was somewhat of a large one, and worth seeing, so I could not help overhearing the conversation of Miss Thornton and the Doctor, and having heard the first of it my ears grew so unnaturally quickened, that I could not for the life of me avoid hearing the whole, though I was ashamed of playing eavesdropper.

"My God, sir!" I heard her say, "what new madness is this? Why do you persist in separating yourself from your family in this manner?"

"No madness at all, my dear madam," he answered; "you would have done the same under the circumstances. My brother was civil, but I saw he would rather have me away, and continue his stewardship. And so I let him."

Miss Thornton put another question which I did not catch, and the sense of which I could not supply, but I heard his answer plainly: it was,—

"Of course I did, my dear lady, and, just as you may suppose, when I walked up the Ritter Saal, there was a buzz and giggle, and not one held out his hand save noble Von H——; long life to him!"

"But ——?" said Miss Thornton, mentioning somebody, whose name I could not catch.

"I saw him bend over to M—— as I came up to the Presence, and they both laughed. I saw a slight was intended, made my devoirs, and backed off. The next day he sent for me, but I was off and away. I heard of it before I left England."

"And will you never go back?" she said.

"When I can with honour, not before; and that will never be till he is dead, I fear; and his life is as good as mine. So, hey for natural history, and quiet domestic life, and happiness with my English friends! Now, am I wise or not?"

"I fear not," she said.

The Doctor laughed, and taking her hand, kissed it gallantly; by this time we had all turned round, and were coming in.

"Now, Doctor," said the Major, "If you have done flirting with Miss Thornton, look at this snake."

"A noble beast, indeed," said the Doctor. "Friend," he added to Lee, "if you don't want him, I will take him off your hands for a sum of money. He shall be pickled, as I live."

"He is very venomous, sir," said Lee. "The

blacks eat 'em, it's true, but they always cut the head off first. I'd take the head off, sir, before I ventured to taste him."

We all laughed at Lee's supposing that the Doctor meant to make a meal of the deadly serpent, and Lee laughed as loudly as anybody.

"You see, sir," he said, "I've always heard that you French gents ate frogs, so I didn't know as snakes would come amiss."

"Pray, don't take me for a Frenchman, my good lad," said the Doctor; "and as for frogs, they are as good as chickens."

"Well, I've eaten guaners myself," said Lee, "though I can't say much for them. They're uglier than snakes any way."

Lee was made to sit down and take a glass of grog. So, very shortly, the conversation flowed on into its old channel, and, after spending a long and pleasant evening, we all went to bed.

James and I slept in the same room; and, when we were going to bed, I said,—

"James, if that fellow were to die, there would be a chance for you yet."

"With regard to what?" he asked.

"You know well enough, you old humbug," I said; "with regard to Mary Hawker,—*née* Thornton!"

"I doubt it, my lad," he said. "I very much doubt it indeed; and, perhaps, you have heard that there must

be two parties to a bargain, so that even if she were willing to take me, I very much doubt if I would ask her."

"No one could blame you for that," I said, "after what has happened. There are but few men who would like to marry the widow of a coiner."

"You mistake me, Jeff. You mistake me altogether," he answered, walking up and down the room, with one boot off. "That would make but little difference to me. I've no relations to sing out about a *mésalliance*, you know. No, my dear old fellow, not that; but—Jeff, Jeff! You are the dearest friend I have in the world."

"Jim, my boy," I answered, "I love you like a brother. What is it?"

"I have no secrets from you, Jeff," he said; "so I don't mind telling you." Another hesitation! I grew rather anxious. "What the deuce is coming?" I thought. "What can she have been up to? Go on, old fellow," I added aloud; "let's hear all about it."

He stood at the end of the room, looking rather sheepish. "Why, the fact is, old fellow, that I begin to suspect that I have outlived any little attachment I had in that quarter. I've been staying in the house two months with her, you see; and, in fact!—in fact!"—here he brought up short again.

"James Stockbridge," I said, sitting up in bed, "you atrocious humbug; two months ago you informed

me, with a sigh like a groggy pair of bellows, that her image could only be effaced from your heart by death. You have seduced me, whose only fault was loving you too well to part with you, into coming sixteen thousand miles to a barbarous land, far from kindred and country, on the plea that your blighted affections made England less endurable than—France, I'll say for argument;—and, now having had two months' opportunity of studying the character of the beloved one, you coolly inform me that the whole thing was a mistake. I repeat that you are a humbug."

"If you don't hold your tongue, and that quick," he replied, "I'll send this boot at your ugly head. Now, then!"

I ducked, fully expecting it was coming, and laughed silently under the bed-clothes. I was very happy to hear this—I was very happy to hear that a man, whom I really liked so well, had got the better of a passion for a woman who I knew was utterly incapable of being to him what his romantic high-flown notions required a wife to be. "If this happy result," I said to myself, "can be rendered the more sure by ridicule, that shall not be wanting. Meanwhile, I will sue for peace, and see how it came about."

I rose again and saw he had got his other boot half off, and was watching for me. "Jim," said I, "you ain't angry because I laughed at you, are you?"

"Angry!" he answered. "I am never angry with

you, and you know it. I've been a fool, and I ought to be laughed at."

"Pooh!" said I, "no more a fool than other men have been before you, from father Adam downwards."

"And he was a most con—"

"There," I interrupted: "don't abuse your ancestors. Tell me why you have changed your mind so quick?"

"That's a precious hard thing to do, mind you;" he answered. "A thousand trifling circumstances, which taken apart are as worthless straws, when they are bound up together become a respectable truss, which is marketable, and ponderable. So it is with little traits in Mary's character, which I have only noticed lately, nothing separately, yet when taken together, to say the least, different to what I had imagined while my eyes were blinded. To take one instance among fifty; there's her cousin Tom, one of the finest fellows that ever stepped; but still I don't like to see her, a married woman, allowing him to pull her hair about, and twist flowers in it."

This was very true, but I thought that if James instead of Tom had been allowed the privilege of decorating her hair, he might have looked on it with different eyes. James, I saw, cared too little about her to be very jealous, and so I saw that there was no fear of any coolness between him and Troubridge, which was a thing to be rejoiced at, as it would have been a

terrible blow on our little society, and which I feared at one time that evening would have been the case.

"Jim," said I, "I have got something to tell you. Do you know, I believe there is some mystery about Doctor Mulhaus."

"He is a walking mystery," said Jim; "but he is a noble good fellow, though unhappily a frog-eater."

"Ah! but I believe Miss Thornton knows it."

"Very like," said Jim, yawning.

"I told him all the conversation I overheard that evening."

"Are you sure she said 'the king'?" he asked.

"Quite sure," I said; "now, what do you make of it?"

"I make this of it," he said: "that it is no earthly business of ours, or we should have been informed of it; and if I were you, I wouldn't breathe a word of it to any mortal soul, or let the Doctor suspect that you overheard anything. Secrets where kings are concerned are precious sacred things, old Jeff. Good night!"

CHAPTER V.

SAM BUCKLEY'S EDUCATION.

THIS narrative which I am now writing is neither more nor less than an account of what befell certain of my acquaintances during a period extending over nearly, or quite, twenty years, interspersed, and let us hope embellished, with descriptions of the country in which these circumstances took place, and illustrated by conversations well known to me by frequent repetition, selected as throwing light upon the characters of the persons concerned. Episodes there are, too, which I have thought it worth while to introduce as being more or less interesting, as bearing on the manners of a country but little known, out of which materials it is difficult to select those most proper to make my tale coherent; yet such has been my object, neither to dwell on the one hand unnecessarily on the more unimportant passages, nor on the other hand to omit anything which may be supposed to bear on the general course of events.

Now, during all the time above mentioned, I, Geoffrey Hamlyn, have happened to lead a most uninteresting,

and with few exceptions prosperous existence. I was but little concerned, save as a hearer, in the catalogue of exciting accidents and offences which I chronicle. I have looked on with the deepest interest at the love-making, and ended a bachelor; I have witnessed the fighting afar off, only joining the battle when I could not help it, yet I am a steady old fogey, with a mortal horror of a disturbance of any sort. I have sat drinking with the wine-bibbers, and yet at sixty my hand is as steady as a rock. Money has come to me by mere accumulation; I have taken more pains to spend it than to make it; in short, all through my life's drama, I have been a spectator, and not an actor, and so in this story I shall keep myself as much as possible in the background, only appearing personally when I cannot help it.

Acting on this resolve I must now make my *congé*, and bid you farewell for a few years, and go back to those few sheep which James Stockbridge and I own in the wilderness, and continue the history of those who are more important than myself. I must push on too, for there is a long period of dull stupid prosperity coming to our friends at Baroona and Toonarbin, which we must get over as quickly as is decent. Little Sam Buckley also, though at present a most delightful child, will soon be a mere uninteresting boy. We must teach him to read and write, and ride, and what not, as soon as possible, and see if we can't find a young lady—

well, I won't anticipate, but go on. Go on, did I say?—jump on, rather—two whole years at once.

See Baroona now. Would you know it? I think not. That hut where we spent the pleasant Christmas-day you know of is degraded into the kitchen, and seems moved backward, although it stands in the same place, for a new house is built nearer the river, quite overwhelming the old slab hut in its grandeur—a long low wooden house, with deep cool verandahs all round, already festooned with passion-flowers, and young grape-vines, and fronted by a flower garden, all a-blaze with petunias and geraniums.

It was a summer evening, and all the French windows reaching to the ground were open to admit the cool south wind, which had just come up, deliciously icily cold after a scorching day. In the verandah sat the Major and the Doctor over their claret (for the Major had taken to dining late again now, to his great comfort), and in the garden were Mrs. Buckley and Sam watering the flowers, attended by a man who drew water from a new-made reservoir near the house.

“I think, Doctor,” said the Major, “that the habit of dining in the middle of the day is a gross abuse of the gifts of Providence, and I'll prove it to you. What does a man dine for?—answer me that.”

“To satisfy his hunger, *I* should say,” answered the Doctor.

“Pooh! pooh! stuff and nonsense, my good friend,”

said the Major; "you are speaking at random. I suppose you will say, then, that a black fellow is capable of dining?"

"Highly capable, as far as I can judge from what I have seen," replied the Doctor. "A full-grown fighting black would be ashamed if he couldn't eat a leg of mutton at a sitting."

"And you call that *dining*?" said the Major. "I call it gorging. Why, those fellows are more uncomfortable after food than before. I have seen them sitting close before the fire and rubbing their stomachs with mutton fat to reduce the swelling. Ha! ha! ha!—dining, eh? Oh, Lord!"

"Then if you don't dine to satisfy your hunger, what the deuce do you eat dinners for at all?" asked the Doctor.

"Why," said the Major, spreading his legs out before him with a benign smile, and leaning back in his chair, "I eat my dinner, not so much for the sake of the dinner itself, as for the after-dinnerish feeling which follows: a feeling that you have nothing to do, and that if you had you'd be shot if you'd do it. That, to return to where I started from, is why I won't dine in the middle of the day."

"If that is the way you feel after dinner, I certainly wouldn't."

"All the most amiable feelings in the human breast," continued the Major, "are brought out in their full

perfection by dinner. If a fellow were to come to me now and ask me to lend him ten pounds, I'd do it, provided, you know, that he would fetch out the cheque-book and pen and ink."

"Laziness is nothing," said the Doctor, "unless well carried out. I only contradicted you, however, to draw you out; I agree entirely. Do you know, my friend, I am getting marvellously fond of this climate."

"So am I. But then you know, Doctor, that we are sheltered from the north wind here by the snow-ranges. The summer in Sydney, now, is perfectly infernal. The dust is so thick you can't see your hand before you."

"So I believe," said the Doctor. "By the bye, I got a new butterfly to-day; rather an event, mind you, here, where there are so few."

"What is he?"

"An Hipparchia," said the Doctor, "Sam saw him first and gave chase."

"You seem to be making quite a naturalist of my boy, Doctor. I am sincerely obliged to you. If we can make him take to that sort of thing it may keep him out of much mischief."

"He will never get into much," said the Doctor, "unless I am mistaken; he is the most docile child I ever came across. It is a pleasure to be with him. What are you going to do with him?"

"He must go to school, I am afraid," said the Major with a sigh, "I can't bring my heart to part with him;

but his mother has taught him all she knows, so I suppose he must go to school and fight, and get flogged, and come home with a pipe in his mouth, and an oath on his lips, with his education completed. I don't fancy his staying here among these convict servants, when he is old enough to learn mischief."

"He'll learn as much mischief at a colonial school, I expect," said the Doctor, "and more too. All the evil he hears from these fellows will be like the water on a duck's back; whereas, if you send him to school in a town, he'll learn a dozen vices he'll never hear of here. Get him a tutor."

"That is easier said than done, Doctor. It is very hard to get a respectable tutor in the colony."

"Here is one at your hand," said the Doctor. "Take me."

"My dear friend," said the Major, jumping up, "I would not have dared to ask such a thing. If you would undertake him for a short time?"

"I will undertake the boy's education altogether. Potztausend, and why not! It will be a labour of love, and therefore the more thoroughly done. What shall he learn, now?"

"That I must leave to you."

"A weighty responsibility," said the Doctor. "No Latin or Greek, I suppose? They will be no use to him here."

"Well—no; I suppose not. But I should like him

to learn his Latin grammar. You may depend upon it there's something in the Latin grammar."

"What use has it been to you, Major?"

"Why, the least advantage it has been to me is to give me an insight into the construction of languages, which is some use. But while I was learning the Latin grammar, I learnt other things besides, of more use than the construction of any languages, living or dead. First, I learnt that there were certain things in this world that *must* be done. Next, that there were people in this world, of whom the Masters of Eton were a sample, whose orders must be obeyed without question. Third, I found that it was pleasanter in all ways to do one's duty than to leave it undone. And last, I found out how to bear a moderate amount of birching without any indecent outcry."

"All very useful things," said the Doctor. "Teach a boy one thing well, and you show him how to learn others. History, I suppose?"

"As much as you like, Doctor. His mother has taught him his catechism, and all that sort of thing, and she is the fit person, you know. With the exception of that and the Latin grammar, I trust everything to your discretion."

"There is one thing I leave to you, Major, if you please, and that is corporal chastisement. I am' not at all sure that I could bring myself to flog Sam, and, if I did, it would be very inefficiently done."

"Oh, I'll undertake it," said the Major, "though I believe I shall have an easy task. He won't want much flogging."

At this moment Mrs. Buckley approached with a basketful of fresh-gathered flowers. "The roses don't flower well here, Doctor," she said, "but the geraniums run mad. Here is a salmon-coloured one for your button-hole."

"He has earned it well, Agnes," said her husband. "He has decided the discussion we had last night by offering to undertake Sam's education himself."

"And God's blessing on him for it!" said Mrs. Buckley warmly. "You have taken a great load off my mind, Doctor. I should never have been happy if that boy had gone to school. Come here, Sam."

Sam came bounding into the verandah, and clambered up on his father, as if he had been a tree. He was now eleven years old, and very tall and well-formed for his age. He was a good-looking boy, with regular features, and curly chestnut hair. He had, too, the large grey-blue eye of his father, an eye that never lost for a moment its staring expression of kindly honesty, and the lad's whole countenance was one which, without being particularly handsome, or even very intelligent, won an honest man's regard at first sight.

"My dear Sam," said his mother, "leave off playing with your father's hair, and listen to me, for I have something serious to say to you. Last night your father and I were debating about sending you to school, but

Doctor Mulhaus has himself offered to be your tutor, thereby giving you advantages, for love, which you never could have secured for money. Now, the least we can expect of you, my dear boy, is that you will be docile and attentive to him."

"I will try, Doctor dear," said Sam. "But I am very stupid sometimes, you know."

So the good Doctor, whose head was stored with nearly as much of human knowledge as mortal head could hold, took simple, guileless little Sam by the hand, and led him into the garden of knowledge. Unless I am mistaken, these two will pick more flowers than they will dig potatoes in the aforesaid garden, but I don't think that two such honest souls will gather much unwholesome fruit. The danger is that they will waste their time, which is no danger at all, but a certainty.

I believe that such an education as our Sam got from the Doctor would have made a slattern and a faineant out of half the boys in England. If Sam had been a clever boy, or a conceited boy, he would have ended with a superficial knowledge of things in general, imagining he knew everything when he knew nothing, and would have been left in the end, without a faith either religious or political, a useless, careless man.

This danger the Doctor foresaw in the first month, and going to the Major abruptly, as he walked up and down the garden, took his arm, and said,—

"See here, Buckley. I have undertaken to educate

that boy of yours, and every day I like the task better, and yet every day I see that I have undertaken something beyond me. His appetite for knowledge is insatiable, but he is not an intellectual boy; he makes no deductions of his own, but takes mine for granted. He has no commentary on what he learns, but that of a dissatisfied idealist like me, a man who has been thrown among circumstances sufficiently favourable to make a prime minister out of some men, and yet who has ended by doing nothing. Another thing: this is my first attempt at education, and I have not the schoolmaster's art to keep him to details. Every day I make new resolutions, and every day I break them. The boy turns his great eyes upon me in the middle of some humdrum work, and asks me a question. In answering, I get off the turnpike road, and away we go from lane to lane, from one subject to another, until lesson-time is over, and nothing done. And, if it were merely time wasted, it could be made up, but he remembers every word I say, and believes in it like gospel, when I myself couldn't remember half of it to save my life. Now, my dear fellow, I consider your boy to be a very sacred trust to me, and so I have mentioned all this to you, to give you an opportunity of removing him to where he might be under a stricter discipline, if you thought fit. If he was like some boys, now, I should resign my post at once but, as it is, I shall wait till you turn me out, for two reasons. The first is, that I take such delight in my

task, that I do not care to relinquish it; and the other is, that the lad is naturally so orderly and gentle, that he does not need discipline, like most boys."

"My dear Doctor," replied Major Buckley, "listen to me. If we were in England, and Sam could go to Eton, which, I take it you know, is the best school in the world, I would still earnestly ask you to continue your work. He will probably inherit a great deal of money, and will not have to push his way in the world by his brains; so that close scholarship will be rather unnecessary. I should like him to know history well and thoroughly; for he may mix in the political life of this little colony by and by. Latin grammar, you know," he said, laughing, "is indispensable. Doctor, I trust my boy with you because I know that you will make him a gentleman, as his mother, with God's blessing, will make him a Christian."

So, the Doctor buckled to his task again, with renewed energy; to Euclid, Latin grammar, and fractions. Sam's good memory enabled him to make light of the grammar, and the fractions too were no great difficulty, but the Euclid was an awful trial. He couldn't make out what it was all about. He got on very well until he came nearly to the end of the first book, and then getting among the parallelogram "props," as we used to call them (may their fathers' graves be defiled!), he stuck dead. For a whole evening did he pore patiently over one of them till A B, setting to C D, crossed hands, pousetted,

and whirled round "in Sahara waltz" through his throbbing head. Bed-time, but no rest! Whether he slept or not he could not tell. Who could sleep with that long-bodied, ill-tempered-looking parallelogram AH standing on the bed-clothes, and crying out, in tones loud enough to waken the house, that it never had been, nor never would be equal to the fat jolly square CK ? So, in the morning, Sam woke to the consciousness that he was farther off from the solution than ever, but, having had a good cry, went into the study and tackled to it again.

No good! Breakfast time, and matters much worse! That long peaked-nose vixen of a triangle AHC , which yesterday Sam had made out was equal to half the parallelogram and half the square, now had the audacity to declare that she had nothing to do with either of them; so what was to be done now?

After breakfast Sam took his book and went out to his father, who was sitting smoking in the verandah. He clambered up on to his knee, and then began:—

"Father, dear, see here; can you understand this? You've got to prove, you know,—oh, dear! I've forgot that now."

"Let's see," said the Major; "I am afraid this is a little above me. There's Brentwood, now, could do it; he was in the Artillery, you know, and learnt fortification, and that sort of thing. I don't think I can make much hand of it, Sam."

But Sam had put his head upon his father's shoulder, and was crying bitterly.

"Come, come, my old man," said the Major, "don't give way, you know; don't be beat."

"I can't make it out at all," said Sam, sobbing. "I've got such a buzzing in my head with it! And if I can't do it I must stop; because I can't go on to the next till I understand this. Oh, dear me!"

"Lay your head there a little, my boy, till it gets clearer; then perhaps you will be able to make it out. You may depend on it that you ought to learn it, or the good Doctor wouldn't have set it to you: never let a thing beat you, my son."

So Sam cried on his father's shoulder a little, and then went in with his book; and not long after, the Doctor looked in unperceived, and saw the boy with his elbows on the table and the book before him. Even while he looked a big tear fell plump into the middle of A II; so the Doctor came quietly in and said,—

"Can't you manage it, Sam?"

Sam shook his head.

"Just give me hold of the book; will you, Sam?"

Sam complied without word or comment; the Doctor sent it flying through the open window, half-way down the garden. "There!" said he, nodding his head, "that's the fit place for him this day: you've had enough of him at present; go and tell one of the blacks

to dig some worms, and we'll make holiday and go a fishing."

Sam looked at the Doctor, and then through the window at his old enemy lying in the middle of the flower-bed. He did not like to see the poor book, so lately his master, crumpled and helpless, fallen from its high estate so suddenly. He would have gone to its assistance, and picked it up and smoothed it, the more so as he felt that he had been beaten.

The Doctor seemed to see everything. "Let it lie here, my child," he said; "you are not in a position to assist a fallen enemy; you are still the vanquished party. Go and get the worms."

He went, and when he came back he found the Doctor sitting beside his father in the verandah, with a pen-knife in one hand and the ace of spades in the other. He cut the card into squares, triangles, and parallelograms, while Sam looked on, and, demonstrating as he went, fitted them one into the other, till the boy saw his bugbear of a proposition made as clear as day before his eyes.

"Why," said Sam, "that's all as clear as need be. I understand it. Now may I pick the book up, Doctor?"

History was the pleasantest part of all Sam's tasks, for they would sit in the little room given up for a study, with the French windows open looking on the flower-garden, Sam reading aloud and the Doctor

making discursive commentaries. At last, one day the Doctor said,—

“My boy, we are making too much of a pleasure of this: you must really learn your dates. Now tell me the date of the accession of Edward the Sixth.”

No returns.

“Ah! I thought so: we must not be so discursive. We’ll learn the dates of the Grecian History, as being an effort of memory, you not having read it yet.”

But this plan was rather worse than the other; for one morning, Sam having innocently asked, at half-past eleven, what the battle of Thermopylæ was, Mrs. Buckley coming in, at one, to call them to lunch, found the Doctor, who had begun the account of that glorious fight in English, and then gone on to German, walking up and down the room in a state of excitement, reciting to Sam, who did not know δ from ψ , the soul-moving account of it from Herodotus in good sonorous Greek. She asked, laughing, “What language are you talking now, my dear Doctor?”

“Greek, madam, Greek! and the very best of Greek!”

“And what does Sam think of it? I should like you to learn Greek, my boy, if you can.”

“I thought he was singing, mother,” said Sam; but after that the lad used to sit delighted, by the river side, when they were fishing, while the Doctor, with

his musical voice, repeated some melodious ode of Pindar's.

And so the intellectual education proceeded, with more or less energy; and meanwhile the physical and moral part was not forgotten, though the two latter, like the former, were not very closely attended to, and left a good deal to Providence. (And, having done your best for a boy, in what better hands can you leave him?) But the Major, as an old soldier, had gained a certain faith in the usefulness of physical training; so, when Sam was about twelve, you might have seen him any afternoon on the lawn, with his father, the Major, patiently teaching him singlestick, and Sam as patiently learning, until the boy came to be so marvellously active on his legs, and to show such rapidity of eye and hand, that the Major, on one occasion, having received a more than usually agonizing cut on the forearm, remarked that he thought he was not quite so active on his pins as formerly, and that he must hand the boy over to the Doctor.

"Doctor," said he that day, "I have taught my boy ordinary sword play till, by Jove, sir, he is getting quicker than I am. I wish you would take him in hand and give him a little fencing."

"Who told you I could fence?" said the Doctor.

"Why, I don't know; no one, I think. I have judged, I fancy, more by seeing you flourish your

walking-stick than anything else. You are a fencer, are you not?"

The Doctor laughed. He was, in fact, a consummate *maître d'armes*; and Captain Brentwood, before spoken of, no mean fencer, coming to Barooka on a visit, found that our friend could do exactly as he liked with him, to the Captain's great astonishment. And Sam soon improved under his tuition, not indeed to the extent of being a master of the weapon; he was too large and loosely built for that; but, at all events, so far as to gain an upright and elastic carriage, and to learn the use of his limbs.

The Major issued an edict, giving the most positive orders against its infringement, that Sam should never mount a horse without his special leave and licence. He taught him to ride, indeed, but would not give him much opportunity for practising it. Once or twice a-week he would take him out, but seldom oftener. Sam, who never dreamt of questioning the wisdom and excellence of any of his father's decisions, rather wondered at this; pondering in his own mind how it was that, while all the lads he knew around, now getting pretty numerous, lived, as it were, on horse-back, never walking a quarter of a mile on any occasion, he alone should be discouraged from it. "Perhaps," he said to himself one day, "he doesn't want me to make many acquaintances. Its true, Charley Delisle smokes and swears, which is very ungentlemanly;

but Cecil Mayford, Dad says, is a perfect little gentleman, and I ought to see as much of him as possible, and yet he wouldn't give me a horse to go to their muster. Well, I suppose he has some reason for it."

One holiday the Doctor and the Major were sitting in the verandah after breakfast, when Sam entered to them, and, clambering on to his father as his wont was, said,—

"See here, father! Harry is getting in some young beasts at the stock-yard hut, and Cecil Mayford is coming over to see if any of theirs are among them; may I go out and meet him?"

"To be sure, my boy; why not?"

"May I have Bronsewing, father? He is in the stable."

"It is a nice cool day, and only four miles; why not walk out, my boy?"

Sam looked disappointed, but said nothing.

"I know all about it, my child," said the Major; "Cecil will be there on Blackboy, and you would like to show him that Bronsewing is the superior pony of the two. That's all very natural; but still I say, get your hat, Sam, and trot through the forest on your own two legs, and bring Cecil home to dinner."

Sam still looked disappointed, though he tried not to show it. He went and got his hat, and, meeting the dogs, got such a wild welcome from them that he forgot

all about Bronsewing. Soon his father saw him merrily crossing the paddock with the whole kennel of the establishment, Kangaroo dogs, cattle dogs, and colleys, barking joyously around him.

"There's a good lesson manfully learnt, Doctor," said the Major; "he has learnt to sacrifice his will to mine without argument, because he knows I have always a reason for things. I want that boy to ride as little as possible, but he has earned an exception in his favour to-day.—Jerry!" (After a few calls the stableman appeared.) "Put Mr. Samuel's saddle on Bronsewing, and mine on Ricochette, and bring them round."

So Sam, walking cheerily forward singing, under the light and shadow of the old forest, surrounded by his dogs, hears horses' feet behind him, and looking back sees his father riding and leading Bronsewing saddled.

"Jump up, my boy," said the Major; "Cecil shall see what Bronsewing is like, and how well you can sit him. The reason I altered my mind was that I might reward you for acting like a man, and not arguing. Now, I don't want you to ride much yet for a few years. I don't want my lad to grow up with a pair of bow legs like a groom, and probably something worse, from living on horseback before his bones are set. You see I have a good reason for what I do."

But I think that the lessons Sam liked best of all were the swimming lessons, and at a very early age he

could swim and dive like a black, and once when disporting himself in the water, when not more than thirteen, poor Sam nearly had a stop put to his bathing for ever, and that in a very frightful manner.

His father and he had gone down to bathe one hot noon; the Major had swum out and was standing on the rock wiping himself while Sam was still disporting in the mid-river; as he watched the boy he saw what seemed a stick upon the water, and then, as he perceived the ripple around it, the horrible truth burst on the affrighted father: it was a large black snake crossing the river, and poor little Sam was swimming straight towards it, all unconscious of his danger.

The Major cried out and waved his hand; the boy, seeing something was wrong, turned and made for the shore, and the next moment his father, bending his body back, hurled himself through the air and alighted in the water alongside of him, clutching him round the body, and heading down the river with furious strokes.

“Don’t cling, Sam, or get frightened; make for the shore.”

The lad, although terribly frightened at he knew not what, with infinite courage seconded his father’s efforts although he felt sinking. In a few minutes they were safe on the bank, in time for them to see the reptile land, and crawling up the bank disappear among the rocks.

“God has been very good to us, my son. You

have been saved from a terrible death. Mind you don't breathe a word to your mother about this."

That night Sam dreamt that he was in the coils of a snake, but waking up found that his father was laid beside him in his clothes with one arm round his neck, so he went to sleep again and thought no more of the snake.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not"—a saying which it is just possible you have heard before. I can tell you where it comes from: it is one of the apothegms of the king of a little eastern nation who at one time were settled in Syria, and whose writings are not much read now-a-days, in consequence of the vast mass of literature of a superior kind which this happy century has produced. I can recommend the book, however, as containing some original remarks, and being generally worth reading. The meaning of the above quotation (and the man who said it, mind you, had at one time a reputation for shrewdness) is, as I take it, that a man's morals are very much influenced by the society he is thrown among; and although in these parliamentary times we know that kings must of necessity be fools, yet in this instance I think that the man shows some glimmerings of reason, for his remark tallies singularly with my own personal observation; so, acting on this, while I am giving you the history of this little wild boy of the bush, I cannot do better than give some account of the

companions with whom he chiefly assorted out of school-hours.

With broad intelligent forehead, with large loving hazel eyes, with a frill like Queen Elizabeth, with a brush like a fox ; deep in the brisket, perfect in markings of black, white, and tan ; in sagacity a Pitt, in courage an Anglesey, Rover stands first on my list, and claims to be king of Colley-dogs. In politics I should say Conservative of the high Protectionist sort. Let us have no strange dogs about the place to grub up sacred bones, or we will shake out our frills and tumble them in the dust. Domestic cats may mioul in the garden at night to a certain extent, but a line must be drawn ; after that they must be chased up trees and barked at, if necessary, all night. Opossums and native cats are unfit to cumber the earth, and must be hunted into holes, wherever possible. Cows and other horned animals must not come into the yard, or even look over the garden fence, under penalties. Black fellows must be barked at, and their dogs chased to the uttermost limits of the habitable globe. Such were the chief points of the creed subscribed to by Sam's dog Rover.

All the love that may be between dog and man, and man and dog, existed between Sam and Rover. Never a fresh cheery morning when the boy arose with the consciousness of another happy day before him, but that the dog was waiting for him as he stepped from

his window into clear morning air. Never a walk in the forest, but that Rover was his merry companion. And what would lessons have been without Rover looking in now and then with his head on one side, and his ears cocked, to know when he would be finished and come out to play?

Oh, memorable day, when Sam got separated from his father in the Yass, and, looking back, saw a cloud of dust in the road, and dimly descried Rover, fighting valiantly against fearful odds, with all the dogs in the township upon him! He rode back, and prayed for assistance from the men lounging in front of the public-house; who, pitying his distress, pulled off all the dogs till there were only left Rover and a great white bulldog to do battle. The fight seemed going against Sam's dog; for the bulldog had him by the neck, and held him firm, so that he could do nothing. Nevertheless, mind yourself, master bulldog; you've only got a mouthful of long hair there; and when you do let go, I think, there is danger for you in those fierce gleaming eyes, and terrible grinning fangs.

Sam was crying; and the men round were saying, "Oh! take the bulldog off; the colley's no good to him,"—when a man suddenly appeared at Sam's side, and called out,

"I'll back the colley for five pounds, and here's my money!"

Half-a-dozen five-pound notes were ready for him

at once ; and he had barely got the stakes posted before the event proved he was right. In an evil moment for him the bulldog loosed his hold, and, ere he had time to turn round, Rover had seized him below the eye, and was dragging him about the road, worrying him as he would worry an opossum : so the discomfited owner had to remove his bulldog to save his life. Rover, after showing his teeth and shaking himself, came to Sam as fresh as a daisy ; and the new comer pocketed his five pounds.

"I am so much obliged to you," said Sam, turning to him, "for taking my dog's part! They were all against me."

"I'm much obliged to your dog, sir, for winning me five pound so easy. But there ain't a many bad dogs, or bad men either, about Major Buckley's house."

"Then you know us?" said Sam.

"Ought to it, sir. An old Devonshire man. Mr. Hamlyn's stud-groom, sir—Dick."

Well, as I am going to write Rover's life, in three volumes post octavo, I won't any further entrench on my subject matter, save to say that, while on the subject of Sam's education, I could not well omit a notice of the aforesaid Rover. For, I think that all a man can learn from a dog, Sam learnt from him ; and that is something. Now let us go on to the next of his notable acquaintances.

Who is this glorious, blue-eyed, curly-headed boy,

who bursts into the house like a whirlwind, making it ring again with merry laughter? This is Jim Brentwood, of whom we shall see much anon.

At Waterloo, when the French cavalry were coming up the hill, and our artillerymen were running for the squares, deftly trundling their gun-wheels before them, it happened that there came running towards the square where Major Buckley stood like a tower of strength (the tallest man in the regiment), an artillery officer, begrimed with mud and gunpowder, and dragging a youth by the collar, or rather, what seemed to be the body of a youth. Some cried out to him to let go; but he looked back, seeming to measure the distance between the cavalry and the square, and then, never loosing his hold, held on against hope. Every one thought he would be too late; when some one ran out of the square (men said it was Buckley), and, throwing the wounded lad over his shoulder, ran with him into safety; and a cheer ran along the line from those who saw him do it. Small time for cheering then; for neither could recover his breath before there came a volley of musketry, and all around them, outside the bayonets, was a wild sea of fierce men's faces, horses' heads, gleaming steel, and French blasphemy. A strange scene for the commencement of an acquaintance! And yet it throve; for that same evening, Buckley, talking to his Colonel, saw the artillery officer coming towards them, and asked who he might be?

“That,” said the Colonel, “is Brentwood of the Artillery, who ran away with Lady Kate Bingley, and they haven’t a rap to bless themselves with, sir. It was her brother that you and he fetched into the square to-day.”

And so began a friendship which lasted the lives of both men ; and, I doubt not, will last their sons’ lives too. For Brentwood lived within thirty miles of the Major, and their sons spent much of their time together, having such a friendship for one another as only boys can have.

Captain Brentwood’s son Jim was a very different boy to Sam, though a very fine fellow too. Mischief and laughter were the apparent objects of his life ; and when the Doctor saw him approaching the house, he used to put away Sam’s lesson-books with a sigh and wait for better times. The Captain had himself undertaken his son’s education, and, being a somewhat dreamy man, excessively attached to mathematics, Jim had got, altogether, a very remarkable education indeed ; which, however, is hardly to our purpose just now. Brentwood, I must say, was a widower, and a kind-hearted, easy-going man ; he had, besides, a daughter, who was away at school. Enough of them at present.

The next of Sam’s companions who takes an important part in this history is Cecil Mayford—a delicate, clever little dandy, and courageous withal ; with more brains in his head, I should say, than Sam

and Jim could muster between them. His mother was a widow, who owned the station next down the river from the Buckleys', distant about five miles, and which, since the death of her husband, Doctor Mayford, she had managed with the assistance of an overseer. She had, besides Cecil, a little daughter of great beauty.

Also, I must here mention that the next station below Mrs. Mayford's, on the river, distant by the windings of the valley fifteen miles, and yet, in consequence of a bend, scarcely ten from Major Buckley's at Baroona, was owned and inhabited by Yahoos (by name Donovan), with whom we had nothing to do. But this aforesaid station, which is called Garoopna, will shortly fall into other hands, when you will see that many events of deep importance will take place there, and many pleasant hours spent there by all our friends, more particularly one—by name Sam.

"There is one other left of whom I must say something here, and more immediately. The poor, puling little babe, born in misery and disaster, Mary Hawker's boy Charles!"

Toonarbin was but a short ten miles from Baroona, and, of course, the two families were as one. There was always a hostage from the one house staying as a visitor in the other; and, under such circumstances, of course, Charles and Sam were much together, and, as time went on, got to be firm friends.

Charles was two years younger than Sam; the smallest of all the lads, and perhaps the most unhappy. For the truth must be told: he was morose and uncertain in his temper; and although all the other boys bore with him most generously, as one whom they had heard was born under some great misfortune, yet he was hardly a favourite amongst them; and the poor boy, sometimes perceiving this, would withdraw from his play, and sulk alone, resisting all the sober, kind inducements of Sam, and the merry, impetuous persuasions of Jim, to return.

But he was a kind, good-hearted boy, nevertheless. His temper was not under control; but, after one of his fierce, volcanic bursts of ill-humour, he would be acutely miserable and angry with himself for days, particularly if the object of it had been Jim or Sam, his two especial favourites. On one occasion, after a causeless fit of anger with Jim, while the three were at Major Buckley's together, he got his pony and rode away home, secretly speaking to no one. The other two lamented all the afternoon that he had taken the matter so seriously, and were debating even next morning going after him to propitiate him, when Charles reappeared, having apparently quite recovered his temper, but evidently bent upon something.

He had a bird, a white corrella, which could talk and whistle surprisingly, probably, in fact, the most precious thing he owned. This prodigy he had now brought

back in a basket as a peace-offering, and refused to be comforted, unless Jim accepted it as a present.

“But see, Charley,” said Jim, “I was as much in the wrong as you were” (which was not fact, for Jim was perfectly innocent). “I wouldn’t take your bird for the world.”

But Charles said that his mother approved of it, and if Jim didn’t take it he’d let it fly.

“Well, if you will, old fellow,” said Jim, “I’ll tell you what I would rather have. Give me Fly’s dun pup instead, and take the bird home.”

So this was negotiated after a time, and the corrella was taken back to Toonarbin, wildly excited by the journey, and calling for strong liquor all the way home.

Those who knew the sad circumstances of poor Charles’s birth (the Major, the Doctor, and Mrs. Buckley) treated him with such kindness and consideration, that they won his confidence and love. In any of his Berserk fits, if his mother were not at hand, he would go to Mrs. Buckley and open his griefs; and her motherly tact and kindness seldom failed to still the wild beatings of that poor, sensitive, silly little heart, so that in time he grew to love her as only second to his mother.

Such is my brief and imperfect, and I fear tedious account of Sam’s education, and of the companions with whom he lived, until the boy had grown into a young

man, and his sixteenth birthday came round, on which day, as had been arranged, he was considered to have finished his education, and stand up, young as he was, as a man.

Happy morning, and memorable for one thing at least—that his father, coming into his bedroom and kissing his forehead, led him out to the front door, where was a groom holding a horse handsomer than any Sam had seen before, which pawed the gravel impatient to be ridden, and ere Sam had exhausted half his expressions of wonder and admiration—that his father told him the horse was his, a birthday-present from his mother.

CHAPTER VI.

TOONARBIN.

“BUT,” I think I hear you say, “What has become of Mary Hawker all this time? You raised our interest about her somewhat, at first, as a young and beautiful woman, villain-beguiled, who seemed, too, to have a temper of her own, and promised, under circumstances, to turn out a bit of a b—mst—ne. What is she doing all this time? Has she got fat, or had the small-pox, that you neglect her like this? We had rather more than we wanted of her and her villanous husband in the first volume; and now nothing. Let us, at all events, hear if she is dead or alive. And her husband, too, —although we hope, under Providence, that he has left this wicked world, yet we should be glad to hear of it for certain. Make inquiries, and let us know the result. Likewise, be so good as inform us, how is Miss Thornton?”

To all this I answer humbly, that I will do my best. If you will bring a dull chapter on you, duller even than all the rest, at least read it, and exonerate me.

The fact is, my dear sir, that women like Mary Hawker are not particularly interesting in the piping times of peace. In volcanic and explosive times they, with their wild animal passions, become tragical and remarkable, like baronesses of old. But in tranquil times, as I said, they fall into the back-ground, and show us the value and excellence of such placid, noble helpmates, as the serene, high-bred Mrs. Buckley.

A creek joined the river about a mile below the Buckleys' station, falling into the main stream with rather a pretty cascade, which even at the end of the hottest summer poured a tiny silver thread across the black rocks. Above the cascade the creek cut deep into the table land, making a charming glen, with precipitous blue stone walls, some eighty or ninety feet in height, fringed with black wattle and lightwood, and here and there, among the fallen rocks nearest the water, a fern tree or so, which last I may say are no longer there, Dr. Mulhaus having cut the hearts out of them and eaten them for cabbage. Should you wander up this little gully on a hot summer's day, you would be charmed with the beauty of the scenery, and the shady coolness of the spot; till coming upon a black snake coiled away among the rocks, like a rope on the deck of a man of war, you would probably withdraw, not without a strong inclination to "shy" at every black stick you saw for the rest of the day. For this lower part of the Moira creek was, I am sorry to say, the most troubled

locality for snakes, diamond, black, carpet, and other, which I ever happened to see.

But following this creek you would find that the banks got rapidly less precipitous, and at length it swept in long curves through open forest glades, spreading, too, into deep dark water-holes, only connected by gravelly fords, with a slender stream of clear water running across the yellow pebbles. These water-holes were the haunts of the platypus and the tortoise. Here, too, were flocks of black duck and teal, and as you rode past, the merry little snipe would rise from the water's edge, and whisk away like lightning through the trees. Altogether a pleasant woodland creek, alongside of which, under the mighty box-trees, ran a sandy road, bordered with deep beds of bracken fern, which led from Barooka of the Buckleys to Toonarbin of the Hawkers.

A pleasant road, indeed, winding through the old forest straight towards the mountains, shifting its course so often that every minute some new vista opened upon you, till at length you came suddenly upon a clear space, beyond which rose a picturesque little granite cap, at the foot of which you saw a charming house, covered with green creepers, and backed by huts, sheep-yards, a woolshed, and the usual concomitants of a flourishing Australian sheep station. Behind all again towered lofty, dark hanging woods, closing the prospect.

This is Toonarbin, where Mary Hawker, with her leal and trusty cousin Tom Troubridge for partner,

has pitched her tent, after all her spasmodic, tragical troubles, and here she is leading as happy, and by consequence as uninteresting, an existence as ever fell to the lot of a handsome woman yet.

Mary and Miss Thornton had stayed with the Buckleys until good cousin Tom had got a house ready to receive them, and then they moved up and took possession. Mary and Tom were from the first co-partners, and, latterly, Miss Thornton had invested her money, about £2,000, in the station. Matters were very prosperous, and, after a few years, Tom began to get weighty and didactic in his speech, and to think of turning his attention to politics.

To Mary the past seemed like a dream—as an old dream, well-nigh forgotten. The scene was so changed that at times she could hardly believe that all those dark old days were real. Could she, now so busy and happy, be the same woman who sat worn and frightened over the dying fire with poor Captain Saxon? Is she the same woman whose husband was hurried off one wild night, and transported for coining? Or is all that a hideous imagination?

No. Here is the pledge and proof that it is all too terribly real. This boy, whom she loves so wildly and fiercely, is that man's son, and his father, for aught she knows, is alive, and only a few poor hundred miles off. Never mind; let it be forgotten as though it never was. So she forgot it, and was happy.

But not always. Sometimes she could not but remember what she was, in spite of the many kind friends who surrounded her, and the new and busy life she led. Then would come a fit of despondency, almost of despair, but the natural elasticity of her temper soon dispersed these clouds, and she was her old self again.

Her very old self, indeed. That delicate-minded, intellectual old maid, Miss Thornton, used to remark with silent horror on what she called Mary's levity of behaviour with men, but more especially with honest Tom Troubridge. Many a time, when the old lady was sitting darning (she was always darning; she used to begin darning the things before they were a week out of the draper's shop), would her tears fall upon her work, as she saw Mary sitting with her child in her lap, smiling, while the audacious Tom twisted a flower in her hair, in the way that pleased him best. To see anything wrong, and to say nothing, was a thing impossible. She knew that speaking to Mary would only raise a storm, and so, knowing the man she had to deal with, she determined to speak to Tom.

She was not long without her opportunity. Duly darning one evening, while Mary was away putting her boy to bed, Tom entered from his wine. Him, with a combination of valour and judgment, she immediately attacked, acting upon a rule once laid down to Mary—"My dear, if you want to manage a man, speak to him after dinner."

"Mr. Troubridge," said Miss Thornton. "May I speak a few words to you on private affairs?"

"Madam," said Tom, drawing up a chair, "I am at your service night or day."

"A younger woman," said Miss Thornton, "might feel some delicacy in saying what I am going to say. But old age has its privileges, and so I hope to be forgiven."

"Dear Miss Thornton," said Tom, "you must be going to say something very extraordinary if it requires forgiveness from me."

"Nay, my dear kinsman," said Miss Thornton; "if we begin exchanging compliments, we shall talk all night, and never get to the gist of the matter after all. Here is what I want to say. It seems to me that your attentions to our poor Mary are somewhat more than cousinly, and it behoves me to remind you that she is still a married woman. Is that too blunt? Have I offended you?"

"Nay—no," said Tom; "you could never offend me. I think you are right too. It shall be amended, madam."

And after this Mary missed many delicate little attentions that Tom had been used to pay her. She thought he was sulky on some account at first, but soon her good sense showed her that, if they two were to live together, she must be more circumspect, or mischief would come.

For, after all, Tom had but small place in her heart. Heart filled almost exclusively with this poor sulky little lad of hers, who seemed born to trouble, as the sparks went upward. In teething even, aggravating beyond experience, and afterwards suffering from the whole list of juvenile evils, in such a way as boy never did before; coming out of these troubles too, with a captious, disagreeable temper, jealous in the extreme,—not a member who, on the whole, adds much to the pleasure of the little household,—yet, with the blindest passionate love towards some folks. Instance his mother, Thomas Troubridge, and Sam Buckley.

For these three the lad had a wild hysterical affection, and yet none of them had much power over him. Once by one unconsidered word arouse the boy's obstinacy, and all chance of controlling him was gone. Then, your only chance was to call in Miss Thornton, who had a way of managing the boy, more potent than Mary's hysterics, and Tom's indignant remonstrances, or Sam's quiet persuasions.

For instance,—once, when he was about ten years old, his mother set him to learn some lesson or another, when he had been petitioning to go off somewhere with the men. He was furiously naughty, and threw the book to the other end of the room, all the threats and scoldings of his mother proving insufficient to make him pick it up again. So that at last she went out, leaving him alone, triumphant, with Miss Thornton, who said

not a word, but only raised her eyes off her work, from time to time, to look reproachfully on the rebellious boy. He could stand his mother's anger, but he could not stand those steady wondering looks that came from under the old lady's spectacles. So that, when Mary came in again, she found the book picked up, and the lesson learned. Moreover, it was a fortnight before the lad misbehaved himself again.

In sickness and in health, in summer and in winter, for ten long years after they settled at Toonarbin, did this noble old lady stand beside Mary as a rock of refuge in all troubles, great or small. Always serene, patient, and sensible, even to the last; for the time came when this true and faithful servant was removed from among them to receive her reward.

One morning she confessed herself unable to leave her bed; that was the first notice they had. Doctor Mayford, sent for secretly, visited her. "Break up of the constitution," said he,—“no organic disease,”—but shook his head. "She will go," he added, "with the first frost. I can do nothing." And Dr. Mulhaus, being consulted, said he was but an amateur doctor, but concurred with Dr. Mayford. So there was nothing to do but to wait for the end as patiently as might be.

During the summer she got out of bed, and sat in a chair, which Tom used to lift dexterously into the verandah. There she would sit very quietly; sometimes getting Mrs. Buckley, who came and lived at

Toonarbin that summer, to read a hymn for her ; and, during this time, she told them where she would like to be buried.

On a little knoll, she said, which lay to the right of the house, barely two hundred yards from the window. Here the grass grew shorter and closer than elsewhere, and here freshened more rapidly beneath the autumn rains. Here, on winter's evenings, the slanting sunbeams lingered longest, and here, at such times, she had been accustomed to saunter, listening to the sighing of the wind, in the dark funeral sheoaks and cypresses, like the far-off sea upon a sandy shore. Here, too, came oftener than elsewhere a flock of lories, making the dark low trees gay with flying living blossoms. And here she would lie with her feet towards the east, her sightless eyes towards that dreary ocean which she would never cross again.

One fresh spring morning she sat up and talked serenely to Mrs. Buckley, about matters far higher and more sacred than one likes to deal with in a tale of this kind, and, after a time, expressed a wish for a blossom of a great amaryllis which grew just in front of her window.

Mrs. Buckley got the flower for her, and so holding the crimson-striped lily in her delicate, wasted fingers, the good old lady passed from this world without a struggle, as decently and as quietly as she had always lived in it.

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This happened when Charles was about ten years old, and, for some time, the lad was subdued and sad. He used to look out of the window at night towards the grave, and wonder why they had put her they all loved so well, to lie out there under the wild-sweeping winter rain. But, by degrees, he got used to the little square white railing on the sheoak knoll, and, ere half a year was gone, the memory of his aunt had become very dim and indistinct.

Poor Mary, too, though a long while prepared for it, was very deeply and sincerely grieved at Miss Thornton's death; but she soon recovered from it. It came in the course of nature, and, although the house looked blank and dull for a time, yet there was too much life all around her, too much youthful happy life, to make it possible to dwell very long on the death of one who had left them full of years and honour. But Lord Frederick, before spoken of incidentally in this narrative, playing billiards at Gibraltar, about a year after this; had put into his hand a letter, from which, when opened, there fell a lock of silver grey hair on the green cloth, which he carefully picked up, and, leaving his game, went home to his quarters. His comrades thought it was his father who was dead, and when they heard it was only his sister's old governess, they wondered exceedingly; "for Fred," said they, "is not given to be sentimental."

And now, in a year or two, it began to be very difficult to keep Master Charley in order. When he was about thirteen, there was a regular guerilla-war between him and his mother, on the subject of learning, which ended, ultimately, in the boy flatly refusing to learn anything. His natural capacities were but small, and, under any circumstances, knowledge would only have been acquired by him with infinite pains. But, as it was, with his selfishness fostered so excessively by his mother's indulgence, and Tom's good-humoured carelessness, it became totally impossible to teach him anything. In vain his mother scolded and wept, in vain Tom represented to him the beauties and excellences of learning—learn the boy would not ; so that at fourteen he was given up in despair by his mother, having learnt nearly enough of reading, writing, and ciphering, to carry on the most ordinary business of life,—a most lamentable state of things for a lad who, in after life, would be a rich man, and who, in a young and rapidly-rising country, might become, by the help of education, politically influential.

I think that when Samuel Buckley and James Brentwood were grown to be young men of eighteen or nineteen, and he was about seventeen or so, a stranger would have seen a great deal of difference between the two former and the latter, and would, probably, have remarked that James and Sam spoke and behaved like two gentlemen, but that Charles did

not, but seemed as though he had come from a lower grade in society,—with some truth too, for there was a circumstance in his bringing up which brought him more harm than all his neglect of learning, and all his mother's foolish indulgences.

Both Major Buckley and Captain Brentwood made it a law of the Medes and Persians that neither of their sons should hold any conversation with the convict servants, save in the presence of competent authorities; and, indeed, they both, as soon as increased emigration enabled them, removed their old household servants, and replaced them by free men, newly arrived: a lazy independent class, certainly, with exaggerated notions of their own importance in this new phase of their life, but without the worse vices of the convicts. This rule, even in such well-regulated households, was a very hard one to get observed, even under flogging penalties; and, indeed, formed the staple affliction of poor thoughtless Jim's early life, as this little anecdote will show:—

One day going to see Captain Brentwood, when Jim was about ten years old, I met that young gentleman (looking, I thought, a little out of sorts) about two hundred yards from the house. He turned with me to go back, and, after the first salutations, I said,—

“Well, Jim, my boy, I hope you've been good since I saw you last?”

“Oh dear, no,” was the answer, with a shake of the head that meant volumes.

"I'm sorry to hear that; what is the matter?"

"I've been *catching* it," said Jim, in a whisper, coming close alongside of me. "A tea-stick as thick as my forefinger all over."—Here he entered into particulars, which, however harmless in themselves, were not of a sort usually written in books.

"That's a bad job," I said; "what was it for?"

"Why, I slipped off with Jerry to look after some colts on the black swamp, and was gone all the afternoon; and so Dad missed me; and when I got home didn't I *catch it*! Oh lord, I'm all over blue wales; but that ain't the worst."

"What's the next misfortune?" I inquired.

"Why, when he got hold of me he said, 'Is this the first time you have been away with Jerry, sir?' and I said, 'Yes' (which was the awfulest lie ever you heard, for I went over to Barker's with him two days before); then he said, 'Well, I must believe you if you say so. I shall not disgrace you by making inquiries among the men;' and then he gave it to me for going that time, and since then I've felt like Cain and Abel for telling him such a lie. What would you do,—eh?"

"I should tell him all about it," I said.

"Ah, but then I shall catch it again, don't you see! Hadn't I better wait till these wales are gone down?"

"I wouldn't, if I were you," I answered; "I'd tell him at once."

"I wonder why he is so particular," said Jim; "the

Delisles and the Donovans spend as much of their time in the huts as they do in the house."

"And fine young blackguards they'll turn out," I said; in which I was right in those two instances. And although I have seen young fellows brought up among convicts who have turned out respectable in the end, yet it is not a promising school for good citizens.

But at Toonarbin no such precautions as these were taken with regard to Charles. Tom was too careless, and Mary too indulgent. It was hard enough to restrain the boy during the lesson hours, falsely so called. After that he was allowed to go where he liked, and even his mother sometimes felt relieved by his absence; so that he was continually in the men's huts, listening to their yarns—sometimes harmless bush adventures, sometimes, perhaps, ribald stories which he could not understand; but one day Tom Troubridge coming by the hut looked in quietly, and saw master Charles smoking a black pipe, (he was not more than fourteen,) and heard such a conversation going on that he advanced suddenly upon them, and ordered the boy home in a sterner tone than he had ever used to him before, and looked out of the door till he had disappeared. Then he turned round to the men.

There were three of them, all convicts, one of whom, the one he had heard talking when he came in, was a large, desperate-looking fellow. When these men mean to deprecate your anger, I have remarked they always

look you blankly in the face ; but if they mean to defy you and be impudent, they never look at you, but always begin fumbling and fidgetting with something. So when Tom saw that the big man before mentioned (Daniel Harvey by name) was stooping down before the fire, he knew he was going to have a row, and waited.

“ So boss,” began the ruffian, not looking at him, “ we ain’t fit company for the likes of that kinchin,—eh ? ”

“ You’re not fit company for any man except the hangman,” said Tom, looking more like six-foot-six than six-foot-three.

“ Oh my —— (colonial oath !) ” said the other ; “ oh my —— ‘ cabbage tree ! ’ So there’s going to be a coil about that scrubby little myrnonger ; eh ? Don’t you fret your bingy,* boss ; he’ll be as good a man as his father yet.”

For an instant a dark shadow passed over Tom’s face.

“ So,” he thought, “ these fellows know all about George Hawker, eh ? Well, never mind ; what odds if they do ? ” And then he said aloud, turning round on Harvey, “ Look you here, you dog ; if I ever hear of your talking in that style before that boy, or any other boy, by George I’ll twist your head off ! ”

He advanced towards him, as if to perform that feat on the spot ; in a moment the convict had snatched his knife from his belt and rushed upon him.

* As a specimen of colonial slang, the above is not in the least exaggerated.

Very suddenly indeed; but not quite quick enough to take the champion of Devon by surprise. Ere he was well within reach Tom had seized the hand that held the knife, and with a backward kick of his left foot sent the embryo assassin sprawling on his back on the top of the fire, whence Tom dragged him by his heels, far more astonished than burnt. The other two men had, meanwhile, sat taking no notice, or seeming to take none, of the disturbance. Now, however, one of them spoke, and said,—

“I’m sure, sir, you didn’t hear me say nothing wrong to the young gent,” and so on, in a whining tone, till Tom cut him short by saying that, “if he had any more nonsense among them, he would send ’em all three over to Captain Desborough, to the tune of fifty (lashes) a-piece.”

After this little *émeute* Charles did not dare to go into the huts, and soon after these three men were exchanged. But there remained one man whose conversation and teaching, though not, perhaps, so openly outrageously villanous as that of the worthy Harvey, still had a very unfortunate effect on his character.

This was a rather small, wiry, active man, by name Jackson, a native, colonially convicted,* very clever among horses, a capital light-weight boxer, and in running superb, a pupil and *protégé* of the immortal

* A man born in the colony, of European parents, convicted of some crime committed in the colony.

“flying pieman,”* (May his shadow never be less!) a capital cricketer, and a supreme humbug. This man, by his various accomplishments and great tact, had won a high place in Tom Troubridge’s estimation, and was put in a place of trust among the horses; consequently having continual access to Charles, to whom he made himself highly agreeable, as being heir to the property; giving him such insights into the worst side of sporting life, and such truthful accounts of low life in Sydney, as would have gone far to corrupt a lad of far stronger moral principle than he.

And so, between this teaching of evil and neglect of good, Mary Hawker’s boy did not grow up all that might be desired. And at seventeen, I am sorry to say, he got into a most disreputable connexion with a Highland girl, at one of the Donovans’ out-station huts; which caused his kindly guardian, Tom Troubridge, a great deal of vexation, and his mother the deepest grief, which was much increased at the same time by something I will relate in the next chapter.

So sixteen years rolled peacefully away, chequered by such trifling lights and shadows as I have spoken of. The new generation, the children of those whom we knew at first, are now ready to take their places, and bear themselves with more or less credit in what may be going on. And now comes a period which in the

* A great Australian pedestrian; now, I believe, gathered to his fathers.

memory of all those whom I have introduced to you ranks as the most important of their lives. To me, looking back upon nearly sixty years of memory, the events which are coming stand out from the rest of my quiet life, well defined and remarkable, above all others. As looking on our western moors, one sees the long straight sky-line, broken only once in many miles by some fantastic Tor.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH MARY HAWKER LOSES ONE OF HER OLDEST SWEETHEARTS.

SIXTEEN years of peace and plenty had rolled over the heads of James Stockbridge and myself, and we had grown to be rich. Our agent used to rub his hands, and bow, whenever our high mightinesses visited town. There was money in the bank, there was claret in the cellar, there were race-horses in the paddock; in short, we were wealthy prosperous men—James a magistrate.

November set in burning hot, and by the tenth the grass was as dry as stubble; still we hoped for a thunder-storm and a few days' rain, but none came. December wore wearily on, and by Christmas the smaller creeks, except those which were snow-fed, were reduced to a few muddy pools, and vast quantities of cattle were congregated within easy reach of the river, from other people's runs, miles away.

Of course, feed began to get very scarce, yet we were hardly so bad off yet as our neighbours, for we had just parted with every beast we could spare, at high prices,

to Port Phillip, and were only waiting for the first rains to start after store cattle, which were somewhat hard to get near the new colony.

No rain yet, and we were in the end of January ; the fountains of heaven were dried up, but now all round the northern horizon the bush fires burn continually, a pillar of smoke by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Nearer, night by night, like an enemy creeping up to a beleaguered town. The weather had been very still for some time, and we took precaution to burn great strips of grass all round the paddocks to the north, but, in spite of all our precautions, I knew that, should a strong wind come on from that quarter, nothing short of a miracle would save us.

But as yet the weather was very still, not very bright, but rather cloudy, and a dense haze of smoke was over everything, making the distances look ten times as far as they really were, and rendering the whole landscape as grey and melancholy as you can conceive. There was nothing much to be done, but to sit in the verandah, drinking claret-and-water, and watching and hoping for a thunderstorm.

On the third of February the heat was worse than ever, but no wind ; and as the sun went down among the lurid smoke, red as blood, I thought I made out a few brush-shaped white clouds rising in the north.

Jim and I sat there late, not talking much. We knew that if we were to be burnt out our loss would be

very heavy; but we thanked God that even were we to lose everything it would not be irreparable, and that we should still be wealthy. Our brood mares and racing stock were our greatest anxiety. We had a good stack of hay, by which we might keep them alive for another month, supposing all the grass was burnt; but if we lost that, our horses would probably die. I said at last,—

“Jim, we may make up our minds to have the run swept. The fire is burning up now.”

“Yes, it is brightening,” said he, “but it must be twenty miles off still, and if it comes down with a gentle wind we shall save the paddocks and hay. There is a good deal of grass in the lower paddock. I am glad we had the forethought not to feed it down. Well, fire or no fire, I shall go to bed.”

We went to bed, and, in spite of anxiety, mosquitoes, and heat, I feel asleep. In the grey morning I was awakened, nearly suffocated, by a dull continuous roar. It was the wind in the chimney. The north wind, so long imprisoned, had broke loose, and the boughs were crashing, and the trees were falling, before the majesty of his wrath.

I ran out, and met James in the verandah. “It’s all up,” I said. “Get the women and children into the river, and let the men go up to windward with the sheep-skins.* I’ll get on horseback, and go out and see

* Sheep-skins, on sticks, used for beating out the fire when in short grass.

how the Morgans get on. That obstinate fellow will wish he had come in now."

Morgan was a stockman of ours, who lived, with a wife and two children, about eight miles to the northward. We always thought it would have been better for him to move in, but he had put it off, and now the fire had taken us by surprise.

I rode away, dead-up wind. Our station had a few large trees about it, and then all was clear plain and short grass for two miles; after that came scrubby ranges, in an open glade of which the Morgans' hut stood. I feared, from the density of the smoke, that the fire had reached them already, but I thought it my duty to go and see, for I might meet them fleeing, and help them with the children.

I had seen many bush-fires, but never such a one as this. The wind was blowing a hurricane, and, when I had ridden about two miles into scrub, high enough to brush my horse's belly, I began to get frightened. Still I persevered, against hope; the heat grew more fearful every moment; but I reflected that I had often ridden up close to a bush-fire, turned when I began to see the flame through the smoke, and cantered away from it easily.

Then it struck me that I had never yet seen a bush-fire in such a hurricane as this. Then I remembered stories of men riding for their lives, and others of burnt horses and men found in the bush. And, now, I saw a sight which made me turn in good earnest.

I was in lofty timber, and, as I paused, I heard the mighty cracking of fire coming through the wood. At the same instant the blinding smoke burst into a million tongues of flackering flame, and I saw the fire—not where I had ever seen it before—not creeping along among the scrub—but up aloft, a hundred and fifty feet overhead. It had caught the dry bituminous tops of the higher boughs, and was flying along from tree-top to tree-top like lightning. Below, the wind was comparatively moderate, but, up there, it was travelling twenty miles an hour. I saw one tree ignite like gun-cotton, and then my heart grew small, and I turned and fled.

I rode as I never rode before. There were three miles to go ere I cleared the forest, and got among the short grass, where I could save myself—three miles! Ten minutes nearly of intolerable heat, blinding smoke, and mortal terror. Any death but this! Drowning were pleasant, glorious to sink down into the cool sparkling water. But, to be burnt alive! Fool that I was to venture so far! I would give all my money now to be naked and penniless, rolling about in a cool pleasant river.

The maddened, terrified horse, went like the wind, but not like the hurricane—that was too swift for us. The fire had outstripped us over-head, and I could see it dimly through the infernal choking reek, leaping and blazing a hundred yards before me, among the feathery foliage, devouring it, as the south wind devours the

thunder clouds. Then I could see nothing. Was I clear of the forest? Thank the Lord, yes—I was riding over grass.

I managed to pull up the horse, and as I did so, a mob of kangaroos blundered by, blinded, almost against me, noticing me no more in their terror than if I had been a stump or a stone. Soon the fire came hissing along through the grass scarcely six inches high, and I walked my horse through it; then I tumbled off on the blackened ground, and felt as if I should die.

I lay there on the hot black ground. My head felt like a block of stone, and my neck was stiff so that I could not move my head. My throat was swelled and dry as a sand-hill, and there was a roaring in my ears like a cataract. I thought of the cool waterfalls among the rocks far away in Devon. I thought of everything that was cold and pleasant, and then came into my head about Dives praying for a drop of water. I tried to get up, but could not, so lay down again with my head upon my arm.

It grew cooler, and the atmosphere was clearer. I got up, and, mounting my horse, turned homeward. Now I began to think about the station. Could it have escaped? Impossible! The fire would fly a hundred yards or more such a day as this even in low plain. No, it must be gone! There was a great roll in the plain between me and home, so that I could see nothing of our place—all around the country was black, without a

trace of vegetation. Behind me were the smoking ruins of the forest I had escaped from, where now the burnt-out trees began to thunder down rapidly, and before, to the south, I could see the fire raging miles away.

So the station is burnt, then? No! For as I top the ridge, there it is before me, standing as of old—a bright oasis in the desert of burnt country round. Ay! the very hay-stack is safe! And the paddocks?—all right!—glory be to God!

I got home, and James came running to meet me.

“I was getting terribly frightened, old man,” said he. “I thought you were caught. Lord save us, you look ten years older than you did this morning!”

I tried to answer, but could not speak for drought. He ran and got me a great tumbler of claret-and-water; and, in the evening, having drunk about an imperial gallon of water, and taken afterwards some claret, I felt pretty well revived.

Men were sent out at once to see after the Morgans, and found them perfectly safe, but very much frightened; they had, however, saved their hut, for the fire had passed before the wind had got to its full strength.

So we were delivered from the fire; but still no rain. All day, for the next month, the hot north wind would blow till five o'clock, and then a cool southerly breeze would come up and revive us; but still the heavens were dry, and our cattle died by hundreds.

On the eighteenth of March, we sat in the verandah looking still over the blackened unlovely prospect, but now cheerfully and with hope; for the eastern sky was piled up range beyond range with the scarlet and purple splendour of cloud-land, and, as darkness gathered, we saw the lightning, not twinkling and glimmering harmlessly about the horizon, as it had been all the summer, but falling sheer in violet-coloured rivers behind the dark curtain of rain that hung from the black edge of a teeming thunder-cloud.

We had asked our overseer in that night, being Saturday, to drink with us; he sat very still, and talked but little, as was his wont. I slapped him on the back, and said:—

“Do you remember, Geordie, that muff in Thalaba who chose the wrong cloud? He should have got you or me to choose for him; we wouldn't have made a mistake, I know. We would have chosen such a one as yon glorious big-bellied fellow. See how grandly he comes growling up!”

“It's just come,” said he, “without the praying for. When the fire came owre the hill the other day, I just put up a bit prayer to the Lord, that He'd spare the haystack, and He spared it. (I didna stop working, ye ken; I worked the harder; if ye dinna mean to work, ye should na pray.) But I never prayed for rain,—I didna, ye see, like to ask the Lord to upset all his gran' laws of electricity and evaporation, just because it would

suit us. I thoct He'd likely ken better than mysel. Hech, sirs, but that chiel's riding hard ! ”

A horseman appeared making for the station at full speed ; when he was quite close, Jim called out, “ By Jove, it is Doctor Mulhaus ! ” and we ran out into the yard to meet him.

Before any one had time to speak, he shouted out : “ My dear boys, I'm so glad I am in time : we are going to see one of the grandest electrical disturbances it has ever been my lot to witness. I reined up just now to look, and I calculated that the southern point of explosion alone is discharging nine times in the minute. How is your barometer ? ”

“ Haven't looked, Doctor.”

“ Careless fellow,” he replied, “ you don't deserve to have one.”

“ Never mind, sir, we have got you safe and snug out of the thunder-storm. It is going to be very heavy I think. I only hope we will have plenty of rain.”

“ Not much doubt of it,” said he. “ Now, come into the verandah and let us watch the storm.”

We went and sat there ; the highest peaks of the great cloud alps, lately brilliant red, were now cold silver grey, harshly defined against a faint crimson background, and we began to hear the thunder rolling and muttering. All else was deadly still and heavy.

“ Mark the lightning ! ” said the Doctor ; “ that which

is before the rain-wall is white, and that behind violet-coloured. Here comes the thundergust."

A fierce blast of wind came hurrying on, carrying a cloud of dust and leaves before it. It shook the four corners of the house and passed away. And now it was a fearful sight to see the rain-spouts pouring from the black edge of the lower cloud as from a pitcher, nearly overhead, and lit up by a continuous blaze of lightning: another blast of wind, now a few drops, and in ten minutes you could barely distinguish the thunder above the rattle of the rain on the shingles.

It warred and banged around us for an hour, so that we could hardly hear one another speak. At length the Doctor bawled,—

"We shall have a crack closer than any yet, you'll see; we always have one particular one;—our atmosphere is not restored to its balance yet,—there!"

The curtains were drawn, and yet, for an instant, the room was as bright as day. Simultaneously there came a crack and an explosion, so loud and terrifying, that, used as I was to such an event, I involuntarily jumped up from my seat.

"Are you all right here?" said the Doctor; and, running out into the kitchen, shouted, "Any one hurt?"

The kitchen girl said that the lightning had run all down her back like cold water, and the housekeeper averred that she thought the thunder had taken the roof

of the house off. So we soon perceived that nothing was the matter, and sat down again to our discourse, and our supper. "Well," began I, "here's the rain come at last. In a fortnight there will be good grass again. We ought to start and get some store cattle."

"But where?" replied James. "We shall have to go a long way for them; everyone will be wanting the same thing now. We must push a long way north, and make a depôt somewhere westward. Then we can pick them up by sixes and sevens at a time. When shall we go?"

"The sooner the better."

"I think I will come with you," said the Doctor. "I have not been a journey for some time."

"Your conversation, sir," I said, "will shorten the journey by one-half"—which was sincerely said.

Away we went northward, with the mountains on our left, leaving snow-streaked Kosciusko nearly behind us, till a great pass, through the granite walls, opened to the westward, up which we turned, Mount Murray towering up the south. Soon we were on the Murrumbidgee, sweeping from side to side of his mountain valley in broad curves, sometimes rushing hoarse, swollen by the late rains, under belts of high timber, and sometimes dividing broad meadows of rich grass, growing green once more under the invigorating hand of autumn. All nature had awakened from her deep summer sleep, the air was brisk and nimble, and seldom did three

happier men ride on their way than James, the Doctor, and I.

Good Doctor! How he beguiled the way with his learning!—in ecstasies all the time, enjoying everything, animate or inanimate, as you or I would enjoy a new play or a new opera. How I envied him! He was like a man always reading a new and pleasant book. At first the stockmen rode behind, talking about beasts, and horses, and what not—often talking about nothing at all, but riding along utterly without thought, if such a thing could be. But soon I noticed they would draw up closer, and regard the Doctor with some sort of attention, till toward the evening of the second day, one of them, our old acquaintance, Dick, asked the Doctor a question, as to why, if I remember right, certain trees should grow in certain localities, and there only. The Doctor reined up alongside him directly, and in plain forcible language explained the matter: how that some plants required more of one sort of substance than another, and how they get it out of particular soils; and how, in the lapse of years, they had come to thrive best on the soil that suited them, and had got stunted and died out in other parts. “See,” said he, “how the turkey holds to the plains, and the pheasant (lyre-bird) to the scrub, because each one finds its food there. Trees cannot move; but by time, and by positively refusing to grow on unkindly soils, they arrange themselves in the localities which suit them best.”

So after this they rode with the Doctor always, both

hearing him and asking him questions, and at last, won by his blunt kindness, they grew to like and respect him in their way, even as we did.

So we fared on through bad weather and rough country, enjoying a journey which, but for him, would have been a mere trial of patience. Northward ever, through forest and plain, over mountain and swamp, across sandstone, limestone, granite, and rich volcanic land, each marked distinctly by a varying vegetation. Sometimes we would camp out, but oftener managed to reach a station at night. We got well across the dry country between the Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan, now abounding with pools of water; and, having crossed the latter river, held on our course toward Croker's Range, which we skirted; and, after having been about a fortnight out, arrived at the lowest station on the Macquarrie late in the afternoon.

This was our present destination. The owner was a friend of ours, who gave us a hearty welcome, and, on our inquiries as to store cattle, thought that we might pick up a good mob of them from one station or another. "We might," said he, "make a depôt for them, as we collected them, on some unoccupied land down the river. It was poor country, but there was grass enough to keep them alive. He would show us a good place, in a fork, where it was impossible to cross on two sides, and where they would be easily kept together; that was, if we liked to risk it."

"Risk what?" we asked.

"Blacks," said he. "They are mortal troublesome just now down the river. I thought we had quieted them, but they have been up to their old games lately, spearing cattle, and so on. I don't like, in fact, to go too far down there alone. I don't think they are Macquarrie blacks; I fancy they must have come up from the Darling, through the marshes."

We thought we should have no reason to be afraid with such a strong party as ours; and Owen, our host, having some spare cattle, we were employed for the next three days in getting them in. We got nearly a hundred head from him.

The first morning we got there the Doctor had vanished; but the third evening, as we were sitting down to supper, in he came, dead beat, with a great bag full of stones. When we had drawn round the fire, I said:

"Have you got any new fossils for us to see?"

"Not one," said he; "only some minerals."

"Do not you think, sir," said Owen, our host, "that there are some ores of metals round this country? The reason I ask you is, we so often pick up curious-coloured stones, like those we get from the miners at home, in Wales, where I come from."

"I think you will find some rich mines near here soon. Stay; it can do you no harm. I will tell you something: three days ago I followed up the river, and about twenty miles above this spot I became attracted

by the conformation of the country, and remarked it as being very similar to some very famous spots in South America. 'Here,' I said to myself, 'Maximilian, you have your volcanic disturbance, your granite, your clay, slate, and sandstone upheaved, and seamed with quartz;—why should you not discover here, what is certainly here, more or less?'—I looked patiently for two days, and I will show you what I found."

He went to his bag and fetched an angular stone about as big as one's fist. It was white, stained on one side with rust-colour, but in the heart veined with a bright yellow metallic substance, in some places running in delicate veins into the stone, in others breaking out in large shining lumps.

"That's iron-pyrites," said I, as pat as you please.

"Goose!" said the Doctor; "look again."

I looked again; it was certainly different to iron-pyrites; it was brighter, it ran in veins into the stone; it was lumpy, solid, and clean. I said, "It is very beautiful; tell us what it is?"

"Gold!" said he, triumphantly, getting up and walking about the room in an excited way; "that little stone is worth a pound; there is a quarter of an ounce in it. Give me ten tons, only ten cartloads such stone as that, and I would buy a principality."

Every one crowded round the stone open-mouthed, and James said:

"Are you sure it is gold, Doctor?"

"He asks me if I know gold, when I see it,—me, you understand, who have scientifically examined all the best mines in Peru, not to mention the Minas Geraés in the Brazils! My dear fellow, to a man who has once seen it, native gold is unmistakeable, utterly so; there is nothing at all like it."

"But this is a remarkable discovery, sir," said Owen. "What are you going to do?"

"I shall go to the Government," said he, "and make the best bargain I can."

I had better mention here that he afterwards did go to the Government, and announce his discovery. Rather to the Doctor's disgust, however, though he acknowledged the wisdom of the thing, the courteous and able gentleman who then represented his Majesty informed him that he was perfectly aware of the existence of gold, but that he for one should assert the prerogative of the Crown, and prevent any one mining on Crown-lands: as he considered that, were the gold abundant, the effects on the convict population would be eminently disastrous. To which obvious piece of good sense the Doctor bowed his head, and the whole thing passed into oblivion—so much so, that when I heard of Hargreave's discovery in 1851, I had nearly forgotten the Doctor's gold adventure; and I may here state my belief that the knowledge of its existence was confined to very few, and those well-educated men, who never guessed (how could they without considerable

workings?) how abundant it was. As for the stories of shepherds finding gold and selling it to the Jews in Sydney, they are very mythical, and I for one entirely disbelieve them.

In time we had collected about 250 head of cattle from various points into the fork of the river, which lay further down, some seven miles, than his house. As yet we had not been troubled by the blackfellows. Those we had seen seemed pretty civil, and we had not allowed them to get familiar; but this pleasant state of things was not to last. James and the Doctor, with one man, were away for the very last mob, and I was sitting before the fire at the camp, when Dick, who was left behind with me, asked for my gun to go and shoot a duck. I lent it him, and away he went, while I mounted my horse and rode slowly about, heading back such of the cattle as appeared to be wandering too far.

I heard a shot, and almost immediately another; then I heard a queer sort of scream, which puzzled me extremely. I grew frightened and rode towards the quarter where the shots came from, and almost immediately heard a loud call. I replied, and then I saw Dick limping along through the bushes, peering about him and holding his gun as one does when expecting a bird to rise. Suddenly he raised his gun and fired. Out dashed a black fellow from his hiding place, running across the open, and with his second barrel Dick rolled him over. Then I saw half-a-dozen

others rise, shaking their spears; but, seeing me riding up, and supposing I was armed, they made off.

"How did this come about, Dick, my lad?" said I.
"This is a bad job."

"Well," he said, "I just fired at a duck, and the moment my gun was gone off, up jumped half-a-dozen of them, and sent a shower of spears at me, and one has gone into my leg. They must a' thought that I had a single-barrel gun and waited till I'd fired it; but they found their mistake, the devils; for I gave one of them a charge of shot in his stomach at twenty yards, and dropped him; they threw a couple more spears, but both missed, and I hobbled out as well as I could, loading as I went with a couple of tallow cartridges. I saw this other beast skulking, and missed him first time, but he has got something to remember me by now.

"Do you think you can ride to the station and get some help?" said I. "I wish the others were back."

"Yes," he replied, "I will manage it, but I don't like to leave you alone."

"One must stay," I said, "and better the sound man than the wounded one. Come, start off, and let me get to the camp, or they will be plundering that next."

I started him off and ran back to the camp. Everything was safe as yet, and the ground round being clear, and having a double-barrel gun and two pistols, I was not so very much frightened. It is no use to say I was perfectly comfortable, because I wasn't. A Frenchman

writing this, would represent himself as smoking a cigar, and singing with the greatest nonchalance. I did neither. Being an Englishman, I may be allowed to confess that I did not like it.

I had fully made up my mind to fire on the first black who showed himself, but I did not get the opportunity. In about two hours I heard a noise of men shouting and whips cracking, and the Doctor and James rode up with a fresh lot of cattle.

I told them what had happened, and we agreed to wait and watch till news should come from the station, and then to start. There was, as we thought, but little danger while there were four or five together; but the worst of it was, that we were but poorly armed. However, at nightfall, Owen and one of his men came down, reporting that Dick, who had been speared, was getting all right, and bringing also three swords, and a brace of pistols.

James and I took a couple of swords, and began fencing, in play.

"I see," said the Doctor, "that you know the use of a sword, you two."

"Lord bless you!" I said, "we were in the Yeomanry (Landwehr you call it); weren't we, Jim? I was a corporal."

"I wish," said Owen, "that, now we are together, five of us, you would come and give these fellows a lesson; they want it badly."

"Indeed," I said, "I think they have had lesson enough for the present. Dick has put down two of them. Beside, we could not leave the cattle."

"I am sorry," said James, "that any of our party has had this collision with them. I cannot bear shooting the poor brutes. Let us move out of this, homeward, to-morrow morning."

Just before dark, who should come riding down from the station but Dick!—evidently in pain, but making believe that he was quite comfortable.

"Why, Dick, my boy," I said, "I thought you were in bed; you ought to be, at any rate."

"Oh, there's nothing much the matter with me, Mr. Hamlyn," he said. "You will have some trouble with these fellows, unless I am mistaken. *I was told to look after you once*, and I mean to do it."

(He referred to the letter that Lee had sent him years before.)

That night Owen stayed with us at the camp. We set a watch, and he took the morning spell. Everything passed off quietly; but when we came to examine our cattle in the morning, the lot that James had brought in the night before were gone.

The river, flooded when we first came, had now lowered considerably, so that the cattle could cross if they really tried. These last, being wild and restless, had gone over, and we soon found the marks of them across the river.

The Doctor, James, Dick, and I started off after them, having armed ourselves for security. We took a sword a-piece, and each had a pistol. The ground was moist, and the beasts easily tracked; so we thought an easy job was before us, but we soon changed our minds.

Following on the trail of the cattle, we very soon came on the footsteps of a black fellow, evidently more recent than the hoof-marks; then another footstep joined in, and another, and at last we made out that above a dozen blacks were tracking our cattle, and were between us and them.

Still we followed the trail as fast as we could. I was uneasy, for we were insufficiently armed, but I found time to point out to the Doctor, what he had never remarked before, the wonderful difference between the naked foot-print of a white man and a savage. The white man leaves the impression of his whole sole, every toe being distinctly marked, while your black fellow leaves scarce any toe-marks, but seems merely to spurn the ground with the ball of his foot.

I felt very ill at ease. The morning was raw, and a dense fog was over everything. One always feels wretched on such a morning, but on that one I felt miserable. There was an indefinable horror over me, and I talked more than any one, glad to hear the sound of my own voice.

Once, the Doctor turned round and looked at me fixedly from under his dark eyebrows. "Hamlyn," he

said, "I don't think you are well; you talk fast, and are evidently nervous. We are in no danger, I think, but you seem as if you were frightened."

"So I am, Doctor, but I don't know what at."

Jim was riding first, and he turned and said, "I have lost the black fellows' track entirely: here are the hoof-marks, safe enough, but no foot-prints, and the ground seems to be rising."

The fog was very thick, so that we could see nothing above a hundred yards from us. We had come through forest all the way, and were wet with pushing through low shrubs. As we paused came a puff of air, and in five minutes the fog had rolled away, and a clear blue sky and a bright sun were overhead.

Now we could see where we were. We were in the lower end of a precipitous mountain-gully, narrow where we were, and growing rapidly narrower as we advanced. In the fog we had followed the cattle-track right into it, passing, unobserved, two great heaps of tumbled rocks which walled the glen; they were thickly fringed with scrub, and, it immediately struck me that they stood just in the place where we had lost the tracks of the black fellows.

I should have mentioned this, but, at this moment, James caught sight of the lost cattle, and galloped off after them; we followed, and very quickly we had headed them down the glen, and were posting homeward as hard as we could go.

I remember well there was a young bull among them that took the lead. As he came nearly opposite the two piles of rock which I have mentioned, I saw a black fellow leap on a boulder, and send a spear into him.

He headed back, and the other beasts came against him. Before we could pull up we were against the cattle, and then all was confusion and disaster. Two hundred black fellows were on us at once, shouting like devils, and sending down their spears upon us like rain. I heard the Doctor's voice, above all the infernal din, crying "Viva! Swords, my boys; take your swords!" I heard two pistol shots, and then, with deadly wrath in my heart, I charged at a crowd of them, who were huddled together, throwing their spears wildly, and laid about me with my cutlass like a madman.

I saw them scrambling up over the rocks in wild confusion; then I heard the Doctor calling me to come on. He had reined up, and a few of the discomfited savages were throwing spears at him from a long distance. When he saw me turn to come, he turned also, and rode after James, who was two hundred yards ahead, reeling in his saddle like a drunken man, grinding his teeth, and making fierce clutches at a spear which was buried deep in his side, and which at last he succeeded in tearing out. He went a few yards further, and then fell off his horse on the ground.

We were both off in a moment, but when I got his

head on my lap, I saw he was dying. The Doctor looked at the wound, and shook his head. I took his right hand in mine, and the other I held upon his true and faithful heart, until I felt it flutter, and stop for ever.

Then I broke down altogether. "Oh! good old friend! Oh! dear old friend, could you not wait for me? Shall I never see you again?"

Yes! I think that I shall see him again. When I have crossed the dark river which we must all cross, I think he will be one of those who come down to meet me from the gates of the Everlasting City.—

* * * * *

"A man," said the Doctor to me, two days after, when we were sitting together in the station parlour, "who approached as nearly the model which our Great Master has left us as any man I know. I studied and admired him for many years, and now I cannot tell you not to mourn. I can give you no comfort for the loss of such a man, save it be to say that you and I may hope to meet him again, and learn new lessons from him, in a better place than this."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE NEW DEAN OF B—— MAKES HIS APPEARANCE, AND
ASTONISHES THE MAJOR OUT OF HIS PROPRIETY.

ONE evening towards the end of that winter Mrs. Buckley and Sam sat alone before the fire, in the quickly-gathering darkness. The candles were yet unlighted, but the cheerful flickering light produced by the combustion of three or four logs of sheoak, topped by one of dead gum, shone most pleasantly on the well-ordered dining-room, on the close-drawn curtains, on the nicely-polished furniture, on the dinner-table, laid with fair array of white linen, silver, and glass, but, above all, on the honest, quiet face of Sam, who sat before his mother in an easy chair, with his head back, fast asleep.

While she is alternately casting glances of pride and affection towards her sleeping son, and keen looks on the gum log, in search of centipedes, let us take a look at her ourselves, and see how sixteen years have behaved to that handsome face. There is change here, but no deterioration. It is a little rounder perhaps, and also a little fuller in colour, but there are no lines there yet.

"Happiness and ceaseless good temper don't make many wrinkles, even in a warmer climate than old England," says the Major, and says, also, confidentially, to Brentwood, "Put a red camelia in her hair, and send her to the opera even now, and see what a sensation she would make, though she is nearer fifty than forty,"—which was strictly true, although said by her husband, for the raven hair is as black as it was when decorated with the moss-roses of Clere, and the eye is as brilliant as when it flashed with the news of Trafalgar.

Now, the beautiful profile is turned again towards the sleeper as he moves. "Poor boy!" she said. "He is quite knocked up. He must have been twenty-four hours in the saddle. However, he had better be after cattle than in a billiard-room. I wonder if his father will be home to-night."

Suddenly Sam awoke. "Heigho!" said he. "I'm nice company, mother. Have I been asleep?"

"Only for an hour or so, my boy," said she. "See; I've been defending you while you slumbered. I have killed three centipedes, which came out of that old gum log. I cut this big one in half with the fire-shovel, and the head part walked away as if nothing had happened. I must tell the man not to give us rotten wood, or some of us will be getting a nip. It's a long fifty miles from Captain Brentwood's," said Mrs. Buckley after a time. "And that's a very good day's work for little Bronsewing, carrying your father."

“And what has been the news since I have been away,—eh, mother?”

“Why, the greatest news is that the Donovans have sold their station, and are off to Port Phillip.”

“All the world is moving there,” said Sam. “Who has he sold it to?”

“That I can’t find out.—There’s your father, my love.”

There was the noise of horses’ feet and merry voices in the little gravelled yard behind the house, heard above a joyous barking of dogs. Sam ran out to hold his father’s horse, and soon came into the room again, accompanied by his father and Captain Brentwood.

After the first greetings were over, candles were lighted, and the three men stood on the hearth-rug together—a very remarkable group, as you would have said, had you seen them. You might go a long while in any country without seeing three such men in company.

Captain Brentwood, of Artillery renown, was a square, powerfully built man, say five-foot-ten in height. His face, at first sight, appeared rather a stupid one beside the Major’s, expressing rather determination than intelligence; but once engage him in a conversation which interested him, and you would be surprised to see how animated it could become. Then the man, usually so silent, would open up the store-house of his mind, speaking with an eloquence and a force which would

surprise one who did not know him, and which made the Doctor often take the losing side of an argument for the purpose of making him speak. Add to this that he was a thoroughly amiable man, and, as Jim would tell you (in spite of a certain severe whipping you wot of), a most indulgent and excellent father.

Major Buckley's shadow had grown no less,—nay, rather greater, since first we knew him. In other respects, very little alteration, except that his curling brown hair had grown thinner about the temples, and was receding a little from his forehead. But what cared he for that! He was not the last of the Buckleys.

One remarks now, as the two stand together, that Sam, though but nineteen, is very nearly as tall as his father, and promises to be as broad across the shoulders some day, being an exception to colonially-bred men in general, who are long and narrow. He is standing and talking to his father.

“Well, Sam,” said the Major, “so you’re back safe,—eh, my boy! A rough time, I don’t doubt. Strange store-cattle are queer to drive at any time, particularly such weather as you have had.”

“And such a lot, too!” said Sam. “Tell you what, father: it’s lucky you’ve got them cheap, for the half of them are off the ranges.”

“Scrubbers, eh?” said the Major; “well, we must take what we can catch, with this Port Phillip rush. Let’s sit down to dinner; I’ve got some news that will

please you. Fish, eh? See there, Brentwood! What do you think of that for a blackfish? (What was his weight, my dear?) ”

“Seven pounds and a half, as the black fellows brought him in,” said Mrs. Buckley.

“A very pretty fish,” said the Major. “My dear, what is the news?”

“Why, the Donovans have sold their station.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the Major. “Why, we have come from there to-day. Why, we were there last night at a grand party. All the Irishmen in the country side. Such a turmoil I haven’t seen since I was quartered at Cove. So that’s your news,—eh?”

“And so you stepped on there without calling at home, did you?” said Mrs. Buckley. “And perhaps you know who the purchaser is.”

“Don’t you know, my love?”

“No, indeed!” said Mrs. Buckley. “I have been trying to find out these two days. It would be very pleasant to have a good neighbour there,—not that I wish to speak evil of the Donovans; but really they did go on in such terrible style, you know, that one could not go there. Now, tell me who has bought Garoopna.”

“One Brentwood, captain of Artillery.”

“Nonsense!” said Mrs. Buckley. “Is he not joking now, Captain Brentwood? That is far too good news to be true.”

“It is true, nevertheless, madam,” said Captain

Brentwood. "I thought it would meet with your approval, and I can see by Sam's face that it meets with his. You see, my dear lady, Buckley has got to be rather necessary to me. I miss him when he is absent, and I want to be more with him. Again, I am very fond of my son Jim, and my son Jim is very fond of your son Sam, and is always coming here after him when he ought to be at home. So I think I shall see more of him when we are ten miles apart than when we are fifty. And, once more, my daughter Alice, now completing her education in Sydney, comes home to keep house for me in a few months, and I wish her to have the advantage of the society of the lady whom I honour and respect above all others. So I have bought Garoorna."

"If that courtly bow is intended for me, my dear Captain," said Mrs. Buckley, "as I cannot but think it is, believe me that your daughter shall be as my daughter."

"Teach her to be in some slight degree like yourself, Mrs. Buckley," said the Captain, "and you will put me under obligations which I can never repay."

"Altogether, wife," said the Major, "it is the most glorious arrangement that ever was come to. Let us take a glass of sherry all round on it. Sam, my lad, your hand! Brentwood, we have none of us ever seen your daughter. She should be handsome."

"You remember her mother?" said the Captain.

"Who could ever forget Lady Kate who had once seen her?" said the Major.

"Well, Alice is more beautiful than her mother ever was."

There went across the table a bright electric spark out of Mrs. Buckley's eye into her husband's, as rapid as those which move the quivering telegraph needles, and yet not unobserved, I think, by Captain Brentwood, for there grew upon his face a pleasant smile, which, rapidly broadening, ended in a low laugh, by no means disagreeable to hear, though Sam wondered what the joke could be, until the Captain said,—

"An altogether comical party that last night at the Donovans', Buckley! The most comical I ever was at."

Nevertheless, I don't believe that it was that which made him laugh at all.

"A capital party!" said the Major, laughing. "Do you know, Brentwood, I always liked those Donovans, under the rose, and last night I liked them better than ever. They were not such very bad neighbours, although old Donovan wanted to fight a duel with me once. At all events, the welcome I got last night will make me remember them kindly in future."

"I must go down and call there before they go," said Mrs. Buckley. "People who have been our neighbours so many years must not go away without a kind farewell. Was Desborough there?"

"Indeed, he was. Don't you know he is related to the Donovans?"

"Impossible!"

"Fact, my dear, I assure you, according to Mrs. Donovan, who told me that the De Novans and the Desboroughs were cognate Norman families, who settled in Ireland together, and have since frequently inter-married."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Buckley, laughing, "that Desborough did not deny it."

"Not at all, my dear: as he said to me privately, 'Buckley, never deny a relationship with a man worth forty thousand pounds, the least penny, though your ancestors' bones should move in their graves.'"

"I suppose," said Mrs. Buckley, "that he made himself as agreeable as usual."

"As usual, my dear! He made even Brentwood laugh; he danced all the evening with that giddy girl Lesbia Burke, who let slip that she remembered me at Naples in 1805, when she was there with that sad old set, and who consequently must be nearly as old as myself."

"I hope you danced with her," said Mrs. Buckley.

"Indeed I did, my dear. And she wore a wreath of yellow chrysanthemum, no other flowers being obtainable. I assure you we 'kept the flure' in splendid style."

They were all laughing at the idea of the Major dancing, when Sam exclaimed, "Good Lord!"

"What's the matter my boy?" said the Major.

"I must cry peccavi," said Sam. "Father, you will never forgive me! I forgot till this moment a most important message. I was rather knocked up, you see, and went to sleep, and that sent it out of my head."

"You are forgiven, my boy, be it what it may. I hope it is nothing very serious."

"Well, it is very serious," said Sam. "As I was coming by Hanging Rock, I rode up to the door a minute, to see if Cecil was at home,—and Mrs. Mayford came out and wanted me to get off and come in, but I hadn't time; and she said, 'The Dean is coming here to-night, and he'll be with you to-morrow night, I expect. So don't forget to tell your mother.'"

"To-morrow night!" said Mrs. Buckley, aghast. "Why, my dear, boy, that is to-night! What shall I do?"

"Nothing at all, my love," said the Major, "but make them get some supper ready. He can't have expected us to wait dinner till this time."

"I thought," said Captain Brentwood, "that the Dean was gone back to England."

"So he is," said the Major. "But this is a new one. The good old Dean has resigned."

"What is the new one's name?" said the Captain.

"I don't know," said the Major. "Desborough said it was a Doctor Maypole, and that he was very like one in appearance. But you can't trust Desborough, you

know ; he never remembers names. I hope he may be as good a man as his predecessor."

"I hope he may be no worse," said Captain Brentwood ; "but I hope, in addition, that he may be better able to travel, and look after his outlying clergy a little more."

"It looks like it," said the Major, "to be down as far as this, before he has been three months installed."

Mrs. Buckley went out to the kitchen to give orders ; and after that, they sat for an hour or more over their wine, till at length, the Major said,—

"We must give him up in another hour."

Then, as if they had heard him, the dogs began to bark. Rover, who had, against rules, sneaked into the house, and lain *perdu* under the sofa, discovered his retreat by low growling, as though determined to do his duty, let the consequences be what they might. Every now and then, too, when his feelings overpowered him, he would discharge a 'Woof,' like a minute gun at sea.

"That must be him, father," said Sam. "You'll catch it, Mr. Rover !"

He ran out ; a tall black figure was sitting on horseback before the door, and a pleasant cheery voice said, "Pray, is this Major Buckley's ?"

"Yes, sir," said Sam ; "we have been expecting you."

He called for the groom and held the stranger's horse while he dismounted. Then he assisted him to unstrap his valise, and carried it in after him.

The Major, Mrs. Buckley, and the Captain had risen, and were standing ready to greet the Church dignitary as he came in, in the most respectful manner. But when the Major had looked for a moment on the tall figure in black, which advanced towards the fire, instead of saying, "Sir, I am, highly honoured by your visit," or, "Sir, I bid you most heartily welcome," he dashed forward in the most undignified fashion, upsetting a chair, and seizing the reverend Dean by both hands, exclaimed, "God bless my heart and soul! Frank Maberly!"

It was he: the mad curate, now grown into a colonial dean,—sobered, apparently, but unchanged in any material point: still elastic and upright, looking as if for twopence he would take off the black cutaway coat and the broad-brimmed hat, and row seven in the University eight, at a moment's notice. There seems something the matter with him though, as he holds the Major's two hands in his, and looks on his broad handsome face. Something like a shortness of breath prevented his speech, and, strange, the Major seems troubled with the same complaint; but Frank gets over it first, and says,—

"My dear old friend, I am so glad to see you!"

And Mrs. Buckley says, laying her hand upon his arm, "It seems as if all things were arranged to make my husband and myself the happiest couple in the world. If we had been asked to-night, whom of all

people in the world we should have been most glad to see as the new Dean, we should have answered at once, Frank Maberly; and here he is!"

"Then, you did not know whom to expect," said Frank.

"Not we, indeed," said the Major. "Desborough said the new Dean was a Doctor Maypole; and I pictured to myself an old schoolmaster with a birch rod in his coat tail-pocket. And we have been in such a stew all the evening about giving the great man a proper reception. Ha! ha! ha!"

"And will you introduce me to this gentleman?" said the Dean, moving towards Sam, who stood behind his mother.

"This," said the Major, with a radiant smile, "is my son Samuel, whom, I believe, you have seen before."

"So, the pretty boy that I knew at Drumston," said the Dean, laying his hands on Sam's shoulders, "has grown into this noble gentleman! It makes me feel old, but I am glad to feel old under such circumstances. Let me turn your face to the light and see if I can recognise the little lad whom I used to carry pickaback across Hatherleigh Water."

Sam looked in his face—such a kindly good placid face, that it seemed beautiful, though by some rules it was irregular and ugly enough. The Dean laid his hand on Sam's curly head, and said, "God bless you, Samuel Buckley," and won Sam's heart for ever.

All this time Captain Brentwood had stood with his

back against the chimney-piece, perfectly silent, having banished all expression from his countenance; now, however, Major Buckley brought up the Dean and introduced him:—

“My dear Brentwood, the Dean of B——; not Dean to us though, so much as our dear old friend Frank Maberly.”

“Involved grammar,” said the Captain to himself, but, added aloud: “A Churchman of your position, sir, will do me an honour by using my house; but the Mr. Maberly of whom I have so often heard from my friend Buckley will do me a still higher honour if he will allow me to enrol him among the number of my friends.”

Frank the Dean thought that Captain Brentwood’s speech would have made a good piece to turn into Greek prose, in the style of Demosthenes; but he didn’t say so. He looked at the Captain’s stolid face for a moment, and said, as Sam thought, a little abruptly:

“I think, sir, that you and I shall get on very well together when we understand one another.”

The Captain made no reply in articulate speech, but laughed internally, till his sides shook, and held out his hand. The Dean laughed too, as he took it, and said:

“I met a young lady at the Bishop’s the other day, a Miss Brentwood.”

“My daughter, sir,” said the Captain.

"So I guessed—partly from the name, and partly from a certain look about the eyes, rather unmistakable. Allow me to say, sir, that I never remember to have seen such remarkable beauty in my life."

They sat Frank down to supper, and when he had done, the conversation was resumed.

"By-the-bye, Major Buckley," said he, "I miss an old friend, who I heard was living with you; a very dear old friend,—where is Doctor Mulhaus?"

"Dear Doctor," said Mrs. Buckley; "this is his home indeed, but he is away at present on an expedition with two old Devon friends, Hamlyn and Stockbridge."

"Oh!" said Frank, "I have heard of those men; they came out here the year before the Vicar died. I never knew either of them, but I well remember how kindly Stockbridge used to be spoken of by everyone in Drumston. I must make his acquaintance."

"You will make the acquaintance of one of the finest fellows in the world, Dean," said the Major; "I know no worthier man than Stockbridge. I wish Mary Thornton had married him."

"And I hear," said Frank. "that the pretty Mary is your next door neighbour, in partnership with that excellent giant Troubridge. I must go and see them to-morrow. I will produce one of those great roaring laughs of his, by reminding him of our first introduction at the Palace, through a rat."

"I am sorry to say," said the Major, "that Tom is away at Port Phillip, with cattle."

"Port Phillip, again," said Frank; "I have heard of nothing else throughout my journey. I am getting bored with it. Will you tell me what you know about it for certain?"

"Well," said the Major, "it lies about 250 miles south of this, though we cannot get at it without crossing the mountains, in consequence of some terribly dense scrub on some low ranges close to it, which they call, I believe, the Dandenong. It appears, however, when you are there, that there is a great harbour, about forty miles long, surrounded with splendid pastures, which stretch west further than any man has been yet. Take it all in all, I should say it was the best watered, and most available piece of country yet discovered in New Holland."

"Any good rivers?" asked the Dean.

"Plenty of small ones, only one of any size, apparently, which seems to rise somewhere in this direction, and goes in at the head of the bay. They tried years ago to form a settlement on this bay, but Collins, the man entrusted with it, could find no fresh water, which seems strange, as there is, according to all accounts, a fine full-flowing river running by the town."

"They have formed a town there, then?" said the Dean.

"There are a few wooden houses gone up by the river side. I believe they are going to make a town there, and call it Melbourne; we may live to see it a thriving place."

The Major has lived to see his words fulfilled—fulfilled in such marvellous sort, that bald bare statistics read like the wildest romance. At the time he spoke, twenty-two years ago from this present year 1858, the Yarra rolled its clear waters to the sea through the unbroken solitude of a primeval forest, as yet unseen by the eye of a white man. Now there stands there a noble city, with crowded wharves, containing with its suburbs not less than 120,000 inhabitants. 1,000 vessels have lain at one time side by side, off the mouth of that little river, and through the low sandy heads that close the great port towards the sea, thirteen millions sterling of exports is carried away each year by the finest ships in the world. Here, too, are water-works constructed at fabulous expense, a service of steam-ships, between this and the other great cities of Australia, vying in speed and accommodation with the coasting steamers of Great Britain; noble churches, handsome theatres. In short, a great city, which, in its amazing rapidity of growth, utterly surpasses all human experience.

I never stood in Venice contemplating the decay of the grand palaces of her old merchant princes, whose time has gone by for ever. I never watched the slow

downfal of a great commercial city ; but I have seen what to him who thinks aright is an equally grand subject of contemplation—the rapid rise of one. I have seen what but a small moiety of the world, even in these days, has seen, and what, save in this generation, has never been seen before, and will, I think, never be seen again. I have seen Melbourne. Five years in succession did I visit that city, and watch each year how it spread and grew until it was beyond recognition. Every year the press became denser, and the roar of the congregated thousands grew louder, till at last the scream of the flying engine rose above the hubbub of the streets, and two thousand miles of electric wire began to move the clicking needles with ceaseless intelligence.

Unromantic enough, but beyond all conception wonderful. I stood at the east end of Bourke Street, not a year ago, looking at the black swarming masses, which thronged the broad thoroughfare below. All the town lay at my feet, and the sun was going down beyond the distant mountains ; I had just crossed from the front of the new Houses of Legislature, and had nearly been run over by a great omnibus. Partly to recover my breath, and partly, being not used to large cities, to enjoy the really fine scene before me, I stood at the corner of the street in contemplative mood. I felt a hand on my shoulder, and looked round,—it was Major Buckley.

“This is a wonderful sight, Hamlyn,” said he.

"When you think of it," I said, "really think of it, you know, how wonderful it is!"

"Brentwood," said the Major, "has calculated by his mathematics that the progress of the species is forty-seven, decimal eight, more rapid than it was thirty-five years ago."

"So I should be prepared to believe," I said; "where will it all end? Will it be a grand universal republic, think you, in which war is unknown, and universal prosperity has banished crime? I may be too sanguine, but such a state of things is possible. This is a sight which makes a man look far into the future."

"Prosperity," said the Major, "has not done much towards abolishing crime in this town, at all events; and it would not take much to send all this back into its primeval state."

"How so, Major?" said I; "I see here the cradle of a new and mighty empire."

"Two rattling good thumps of an earthquake," said the Major, "would pitch Melbourne into the middle of Port Phillip, and bury all the gold far beyond the reach even of the Ballarat deep-sinkers. Come down and dine with me at the club."

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTAIN Brentwood went back to Garoopna next morning ; but Frank Maberly kept to his resolution of going over to see Mary ; and, soon after breakfast, they were all equipped ready to accompany him, standing in front of the door, waiting for the horses. Frank was remarking how handsome Mrs. Buckley looked in her hat and habit, when she turned and said to him,—

“My dear Dean, I suppose you never jump over five-barred gates now-a-days? Do you remember how you used to come over the white gate at the Vicarage? I suppose you are getting too dignified for any such thing?”

There was a three-railed fence dividing the lower end of the yard from the paddock. He rammed his hat on tight, and took it flying, with his black coat-tails fluttering like wings ; and, coming back laughing, said,—

“There’s a bit of the old Adam for you, Mrs. Buckley ! Be careful how you defy me again.”

The sun was bright overhead, and the land in its full winter verdure, as they rode along the banks of the creek that led to Toonarbin. Frank Maberly was as humorous as ever, and many a merry laugh went ringing through the woodland solitudes, sending the watchman cockatoo screaming aloft to alarm the flock, or startling the brilliant thick-clustered lorries (richest coloured of all parrots in the world), as they hung chattering on some silver-leaved acacia, bending with their weight the fragile boughs down towards the clear still water, lighting up the dark pool with strange, bright reflections of crimson and blue ; startling, too, the feeding doe-kangaroo, who skipped slowly away, followed by her young one—so slowly that the watching travellers expected her to stop each moment, and could scarcely believe she was in full flight till she topped a low ridge and disappeared.

“That is a strange sight to a European, Mrs. Buckley,” said Frank ; “a real wild animal. It seems so strange to me, now, to think that I could go and shoot that beast, and account to no man for it. That is, you know, supposing I had a gun, and powder and shot, and, also, that the kangaroo would be fool enough to wait till I was near enough ; which, you see, is pre-supposing a great deal. Are they easily approached ?”

“Easily enough, on horseback,” said Sam, “but very difficult to come near on foot, which is also the case with all wild animals and birds worth shooting in

this country. A footman,* you see, they all mistake for their hereditary enemy, the blackfellow; but, as yet, they have not come to distinguish a man on horseback from a four-footed beast. And, this seems to show that animals have their traditions like men."

"Pray, Sam, are not these pretty beasts, these kangaroos, becoming extinct?"

"On sheep-runs, very nearly so. Sheep drive them off directly; but on cattle-runs, so far from becoming extinct, they are becoming so numerous as to be a nuisance; consuming a most valuable quantity of grass."

"How can you account for that?"

"Very easily," said Sam; "their enemies are all removed. The settlers have poisoned, in well-settled districts, the native dogs and eagle-hawks, which formerly kept down their numbers. The blacks prefer the beef of the settlers to bad and hard-earned kangaroo venison; and, lastly, the settlers never go after them, but leave them to their own inventions. So that the kangaroo has better times of it than ever."

"That is rather contrary to what one has heard, though," said Frank.

"But Sam is right, Dean," said the Major. "People judge from seeing none of them on the plains, from

* Let not Charles or Jeames suppose that they or their brethren of the plush are here spoken of. Could they be mistaken for *blackfellows*? No; the word footman merely means one who goes afoot instead of riding.

which they have been driven by the sheep; but there are as many in the forest as ever."

"The Emu, now," said Frank, "are they getting scarce?"

"They will soon be among the things of the past," said the Major; "and I am sorry for it, for they are a beautiful and harmless bird."

"Major," said Frank, "how many outlying huts have you?"

"Five," said the Major. "Four shepherds' huts, and one stockkeeper's in the range, which we call the heifer station."

"You have no church here, I know," said Frank; "but do these men get any sort of religious instruction?"

"None whatever," said the Major. "I have service in my house on Sunday, but I cannot ask them to come to it, though sometimes the stockmen do come. The shepherds, you know, are employed on Sunday as on any other day. Sheep must eat!"

"Are any of these men convicts?"

"All the shepherds," said the Major. "The stockman and his assistant are free men, but their hut-keeper is bond."

"Are any of them married?"

"Two of the shepherds; the rest single; but I must tell you that on our run we keep up a regular circulation of books among the huts, and my wife sticks them

full of religious tracts, which is really about all that we can do without a clergyman."

"Do you find they read your tracts, Mrs. Buckley?" asked Frank.

"No," said Mrs. Buckley, "with the exception, perhaps, of 'Black Giles the Poacher,' which always comes home very dirty. Narrative tracts they will read when there is nothing more lively at hand; but such treatises as 'Are You Ready?' and 'The Sinner's Friend,' fall dead. One copy lasts for years."

"One copy of either of them," said Frank, "would last. Then these fellows, Major, are entirely godless, I suppose?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Dean," said the Major, stopping short, "it's about as bad as bad can be; it can't be worse, sir. If by any means you could make it worse, it would be by sending such men round here as the one who was sent here last. He served as a standing joke to the hands for a year or more; and I believe he was sincere enough, too."

"I must invade some of these huts, and see what is to be done," said Frank. "I have had a hard spell of work in London since old times; but I have seen enough already to tell me that that work was not so hopeless as this will be. I think, however, that there is more chance here than among the little farmers in the settled districts. Here, at all events, I shan't have the rum-bottle eternally standing between me and my

man. What a glorious, independent, happy set of men are those said small freeholders, Major! What a happy exchange an English peasant makes when he leaves an old, well-ordered society, the ordinances of religion, the various give-and-take relations between rank and rank, which make up the sum of English life, for independence, godlessness, and rum! He gains, say you! Yes, he gains meat for his dinner every day, and *voilà tout!* Contrast an English workhouse schoolboy—I take the lowest class for example, a class which should not exist—with a small farmer's son in one of the settled districts. Which will make the most useful citizen? Give me the workhouse lad!"

"Oh, but you are over-stating the case, you know, Dean," said the Major. "You must have a class of small farmers! Wherever the land is fit for cultivation it must be sold to agriculturists; or, otherwise, in case of a war, we shall be dependent on Europe and America for the bread we eat. I know some excellent and exemplary men who are farmers, I assure you."

"Of course! of course!" said Frank. "I did not mean quite all I said; but I am angry and disappointed. I pictured to myself the labourer, English, Scotch, or Irish—a man whom I know, and have lived with and worked for some years, emigrating, and, after a few years of honest toil, which, compared to his old hard drudgery, was child's-play, saving money enough to buy a farm. I pictured to myself this man

accumulating wealth, happy, honest, godly, bringing up a family of brave boys and good girls, in a country where, theoretically, the temptations to crime are all but removed : this is what I imagined. I come out here, and what do I find ? My friend the labourer has got his farm, and is prospering, after a sort. He has turned to be a drunken, godless, impudent fellow, and his wife little better than himself ; his daughters dowdy hussies ; his sons lanky, lean, pasty-faced, blaspheming blackguards, drinking rum before breakfast, and living by cheating one another out of horses. Can you deny this picture ? ”

“ Yes,” said the Major, “ I can disprove it by many happy instances, and yet, to say the truth, it is fearfully true in as many more. There is no social influence in the settled districts ; there are too many men without masters. Let us wait and hope.”

“ This is not to the purpose at present, though,” said Mrs. Buckley. “ See what you can do for us in the bush, my dear Dean. You have a very hopeless task before you, I fear.”

“ The more hopeless, the greater glory, madam,” said Frank, taking off his hat and waving it ; called, chosen, and faithful. “ There is a beautiful house ! ”

“ That is Toonarbin,” said the Major ; “ and there’s Mary Hawker in the verandah.”

“ Let us see,” said Mrs. Buckley, “ if she will know him. If she does not recognise him, let no one speak before me.”

When they had ridden up and dismounted, Mrs. Buckley presented Frank. "My dear," said she, "the Dean is honouring us by staying at Baroona for a week, and proposes to visit round at the various stations. To-morrow we go to the Mayfords, and next day to Garoopna."

Mary bowed respectfully to Frank, and said, "that she felt highly honoured," and so forth. "My partner is gone on a journey, and my son is away on the run, or they would have joined with me in bidding you welcome, sir."

Frank would have been highly honoured at making their acquaintance.

Mary started, and looked at him again. "Mr. Maberly! Mr. Maberly!" she said, "your face is changed, but your voice is unchangeable. You are discovered, sir!"

"And are you glad to see me?"

"No!" said Mary, plainly.

"Now," said Mrs. Buckley to herself, "she is going to give us one of her tantrums. I wish she would behave like a reasonable being. She is always bent on making a scene;" but she kept this to herself, and only said aloud: "Mary, my dear! Mary!"

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Mrs. Hawker," said Frank; "but it is just and natural."

"Natural," said Mary, "and just. You are connected in my mind with the most unhappy and most

degraded period of my life. Can you expect that I should be glad to see you? You were kind to me then, as is your nature to be, kind and good above all men whom I know. I thought of you always with love and admiration, as one whom I deeply honoured, but would not care to look upon again. As the one of all whom I would have forget me in my disgrace. And now, to-day of all days; just when I have found the father's vices confirmed in the son, you come before me, as if from the bowels of the earth, to remind me of what I was."

Mrs. Buckley was very much shocked and provoked by this, but held her tongue magnanimously. And what do you think, my dear reader, was the cause of all this hysteric tragic nonsense on the part of Mary? Simply this. The poor soul had been put out of temper. Her son Charles, as I mentioned before, had had a scandalous liason with one Meg Macdonald, daughter of one of the Donovans' (now Brentwood's) shepherds. That morning, this brazen hussy, as Mary very properly called her, had come coolly up to the station and asked for Charles. And on Mary's shaking her fist at her, and bidding her be gone, had then and there rated poor Mary in the best of Gaelic for a quarter of an hour; and Mary, instead of venting her anger on the proper people, had taken her old plan of making herself disagreeable to those who had nothing to do with it, which naturally made Mrs. Buckley very angry, and

even ruffled the placid Major a little, so that he was not sorry when he saw in his wife's face, the expression of which he knew so well, that Mary was going to "catch it."

"I wish, Mary Hawker," said Mrs. Buckley, "that you would remember that the Dean is our guest, and that on our account alone there is due to him some better welcome than what you have given him."

"Now, you are angry with me for speaking truth too abruptly," said Mary crying.

"Well, I am angry with you," said Mrs. Buckley. "If that was the truth, you should not have spoken it now. You have no right to receive an old friend like this."

"You are very unkind to me," said Mary. "Just when after so many years' peace and quietness my troubles are beginning again, you are all turning against me." And so she laid down her head and wept.

"Dear Mrs. Hawker," said Frank, coming up and taking her hand, "if you are in trouble, I know well that my visit is well timed. Where trouble and sorrow are, there is my place, there lies my work. In prosperity my friends sometimes forget me, but my hope and prayer is, that when affliction and disaster come, I may be with them. You do not want me now; but when you do, God grant I may be with you! Remember my words."

She remembered them well.

Frank made an excuse to go out, and Mary, crying bitterly, went into her bedroom. When she was gone, the Major, who had been standing by the window, said,—

“My dear wife, that boy of hers is aggravating her. Don’t be too hard upon her.”

“My dear husband,” said Mrs. Buckley, “I have no patience with her, to welcome an old friend, whom she has not seen for nearly twenty years, in that manner! It is too provoking.”

“You see, my love,” said the Major, “that her nerves have been very much shaken by misfortune, and at times she is really not herself.”

“And I tell you what, mother dear,” said Sam, “Charles Hawker is going on very badly. I tell you, in the strictest confidence, mind, that he has not behaved in a very gentlemanlike way in one particular, and if he was anyone else but who he is, I should have very little to say to him.”

“Well, my dear husband and son,” said Mrs. Buckley, “I will go in and make the *amende* to her. Sam, go and see after the Dean.”

Sam went out, and saw Frank across the yard playing with the dogs. He was going towards him, when a man entering the yard suddenly came up and spoke to him.

It was William Lee—grown older, and less wild-looking, since we saw him first at midnight on Dartmoor,

but a striking person still. His hair had become grizzled, but that was the only sign of age he showed. There was still the same vigour of motion, the same expression of enormous strength about him as formerly; the principal change was in his face. Eighteen years of honest work, among people who in time, finding his real value, had got to treat him more as a friend than a servant, had softened the old expression of reckless ferocity into one of good-humoured independence. And Tom Troubridge, no careless observer of men, had said once to Major Buckley, that he thought his face grew each year more like what it must have been when a boy. A bold flight of fancy for Tom, but, like all else he said, true.

Such was William Lee, as he stopped Sam in the yard, and, with a bold, honest look of admiration, said—

“It makes me feel young to look at you, Mr. Buckley. You are a great stranger here lately. Some young lady to run after, I suppose? Well, never mind; I hope it ain’t Miss Blake.”

“A man may not marry his grandmother, Lee,” said Sam, laughing.

“True for you, sir,” said Lee. “That was wrote up in Drumston church, I mind, and some other things alongside of it, which I could say by heart once on a time—all on black boards, with yellow letters. And also, I remember a spick and span new board, about

how Anthony Hamlyn (that's Mr. Geoffry Hamlyn's father) 'repaired and beautified this church;' which meant that he built a handsome new pew for himself in the chancel. Lord, I think I see him asleep in it now. But never mind that—I've kept a pup of Fly's for you, sir, and got it through the distemper. Fly's pup, by Rolliker, you know."

"Oh, thank you," said Sam. "I am really much obliged to you. But you must let me know the price, you know, Lee. The dog should be a good one."

"Well, Mr. Buckley," said Lee, "I have been cosseting this little beast up in the hopes you'd accept it as a present. And then, says I to myself, when he takes a new chum out to see some sport, and the dog pulls down a flying doe, and the dust goes up like smoke, and the dead sticks come flying about his ears, he will say to his friends, 'That's the dog Lee gave me. Where's his equal?' So don't be too proud to take a present from an old friend."

"Not I, indeed, Lee," said Sam. "I thank you most heartily."

"Who is this long gent in black, sir?" said Lee, looking towards Frank, who was standing and talking with the Major. "A parson, I reckon."

"The Dean of B——," answered Sam.

"Ah! so,"—said Lee,—“come to give us some good advice? Well, we want it bad enough, I hope some on us may foller it. Seems a man, too, and not a monkey.”

"My father says," said Sam, "that he was formerly one of the best boxers he ever saw."

Any further discussion of Frank's physical powers was cut short, by his coming up to Sam and saying,—

"I was thinking of riding out to one of the outlying huts, to have a little conversation with the men. Will you come with me?"

"If you will allow me, I shall be delighted beyond all measure."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Lee, "but I understood you to say that you were going to one of our huts to give the men a discourse. Would you let me take you out to one of them? I'd like well to hear what you'd got to say myself, sir, and I promise you the lads I'll show you want good advice as well as any."

"You will do me infinite service," said Frank. "Sam, if you will excuse me, let me ask you to stay behind. I have a fancy for going up alone. Let me take these men in the rough, and see what I can do unassisted."

"You will be apt to find them uncivil, sir," said Sam. "I am known, and my presence would ensure you outward respect at all events."

"Just what I thought," said Frank. "But I want to see what I can do alone and unassisted. No; stay, and let me storm the place single-handed."

So Lee and he started toward the ranges, riding side by side.

"You will find, sir," said Lee, "that these men, in

this here hut, are a rougher lot than you think for. Very like they'll be cheeky. I would almost have wished you'd a' let Mr. Buckley come. He's a favorite round here, you see, and you'd have gone in as his friend."

"You see," said Frank, turning confidentially to Lee, "I am not an ordinary parson. I am above the others. And what I want is not so much to see what I can do myself, but what sort of a reception any parson coming haphazard among these men will get. That is why I left Mr. Buckley behind. Do you understand me?"

"I understand you, sir," said Lee. "But I'm afeard."

"What are you afraid of?" said Frank, laughing.

"Why, if you'll excuse me, sir, that you'll only get laughed at."

"That all!" said Frank. "Laughter breaks no bones. What are these men that we are going to see?"

"Why, one," said Lee, "is a young Jimmy (I beg your pardon, sir, an emigrant), the other two are old prisoners. Now, see here. These prisoners hate the sight of a parson above all mortal men. And, for why? Because, when they're in prison, all their indulgences, and half their hopes of liberty, depend on how far they can manage to humbug the chaplain with false piety.* And so, when they are free again, they hate him worse

* It must be remembered that Lee's prison experiences went so far back as about 1811.—H. K.

than any man. I am an old prisoner myself, and I know it."

"Have you been a prisoner, then?" said Frank, surprised.

"I was transported, sir, for poaching."

"That all!" said Frank. "Then, you were the victim of a villanous old law. Do you know," he added, laughing, "that I rather believe I have earned transportation myself? I have a horrible schoolboy recollection of a hare who would squeak in my pocket, and of a keeper passing within ten yards of where I lay hidden. If that is all, give me your hand."

Lee shook his head. "That is what I was sent out for," said he, "but since then there are precious few villanies I have not committed. You hadn't ought to shake hands with me, sir."

Frank laid his hand kindly on his shoulder. "I am not a judge," he said. "I am a priest. We must talk together again. Now, we have no time, for, if I mistake not, there is our destination."

They had been riding through splendid open forest, growing denser as they approached the ranges. They had followed a creek all the way, or nearly so, and now came somewhat suddenly on a large reedy waterhole, walled on all sides by dense stringy bark-timber, thickly undergrown with scrub.* Behind them opened a long

* *Scrub*.—I have used, and shall use, this word so often, that some explanation is due to the English reader. I can give no better definition of it than by saying that it means "shrubbery."

vista, formed by the gully, through which they had been approaching, down which the black burnt stems of the stringy bark were agreeably relieved by the white stems of the red and blue gum, growing in the moister and more open space near the creek. In front of them was a slab hut of rich mahogany colour, by no means an unpleasing object among the dull unbroken green of the forest. In front of it was a trodden space littered with the chips of firewood. A pile of the last article lay a few yards in front of the door. And against the walls of the tenement was a long bench, on which stood a calabash, with a lump of soap and a coarse towel; a lamp oven, and a pair of black top-boots, and underneath which lay a noble cattle dog, who, as soon as he saw them, burst out into furious barking, and prepared to give battle.

“Will you take my horse for me,” said Frank to Lee, “while I go inside?”

“Certainly, sir,” said Lee. “But mind the dog.”

Frank laughed and jumped off. The dog was unprepared for this. It was irregular. The proper and usual mode of proceeding would have been for the stranger to have stayed on horseback, and for him (the dog) to have barked himself hoarse, till some one came out of the hut and pacified him by throwing billets of wood at him. No conversation possible till his barking was turned into mourning. He was not up to the emergency. He had never seen a man clothed in black from head to foot

before. He probably thought it was the D——. His sense of duty not being strong enough to outweigh considerations of personal safety, he fled round the house, and being undecided whether to bark or to howl, did both, while Frank opened the door and went in.

The hut was like most other bush huts, consisting of one undivided apartment, formed of split logs, called slabs, set upright in the ground. The roof was of bark, and the whole interior was stained by the smoke into a rich dark brown, such as Teniers or our own beloved Cattermole would delight in. You entered by a door in one of the long sides, and saw that the whole of the end on your right was taken up by a large fireplace, on which blazed a pile of timber. Round the walls were four bed places, like the bunks on board ship, each filled with a heap of frouzy blankets, and in the centre stood a rough table, surrounded by logs of wood, sawn square off, which served for seats.

The living occupants of the hut were scarcely less rude than the hut itself. One of the bed places was occupied by a sleepy, not bad-looking young fellow, clad in greasy red shirt, greasy breeches and boots, and whose shabby plated spurs were tangled in the dirty blankets. He was lying on his back, playing with a beautiful little parrot. Opposite him, sitting up in his bunk, was another young fellow, with a singularly coarse, repulsive countenance, long yellow hair, half-way down his back, clothed like the other in greasy breeches.

This last one was puffing at a short black pipe, in an affected way, making far more noise than was necessary in that operation, and seemed to be thinking of something insolent to say to the last speaker, whoever he may have been.

Another man was sitting on the end of the bench before the fire, with his legs stretched out before it. At the first glance Frank saw that this was a superior person to the others. He was dressed like the others in black top-boots, but, unlike the others, he was clean and neat. In fact the whole man was clean and neat, and had a clean-shaved face, and looked respectable, so far as outward appearances were concerned. The fourth man was the hut-keeper, a wicked-looking old villain, who was baking bread.

Frank looked at the sleepy young man with the parrot, and said to himself, "There's a bad case." He looked at the flash, yellow-haired young snob who was smoking, and said, "There's a worse." He looked at the villanous grey-headed old hut-keeper, and said, "There's a hopeless case altogether." But when he looked at the dry, neatly-dressed man, who sat in front of the fire, he said, "That seems a more likely person. There is some sense of order in him, at all events. See what I can do with him."

He stood with his towering tall black figure in the doorway. The sleepy young man sat up and looked in wonder, while his parrot whistled and chattered loudly.

The yellow-haired young man looked round to see if he could get the others to join him in a laugh. The hut-keeper said, "Oh, h—!" and attended once more to the cooking; but the neat-looking man rose up, and gave Frank courteously "good day."

"I am a clergyman," said Frank, "come to pay you a visit, if you will allow me."

Black-hair looked as if astonishment were a new sensation to him, and he was determined to have the most of it. Meanwhile, little parrot taking advantage of his absence of mind, clambers up his breast and nips off a shirt-button, which he holds in his claw, pretending it is immensely good to eat. Hut-keeper clatters pots and pans, while yellow hair lies down whistling insolently. These last two seem inclined to constitute themselves his Majesty's Opposition in the present matter, while Black-hair and the neat man are evidently inclined towards Frank. There lay a boot in front of the fire, which the neat man, without warning, seized and hurled at Yellow-hair, with such skill and precision that the young fellow started upright in bed and demanded, with many verbs and adjectives, what he meant by that?

"I'll teach you to whistle when a gentleman comes into the hut—you Possumguts! Lie down now, will you?"

Yellow-hair lay down, and there was no more trouble with him. Hut-keeper, too, seeing how matters were

going, left off clattering his pots, and Frank was master of the field.

“Very glad to see you, sir,” says the neat man; “very seldom we get a visit from a gentleman in a black coat, I assure you.”

Frank shook hands with him and thanked him, and then, turning suddenly upon Black-hair, who was sitting with his bird on his knee, one leg out of his bunk, and his great black vacant eyes fixed on Frank, said,—

“What an exceedingly beautiful bird you have got there! Pray, what do you call it?”

Now it so happened that Black-hair had been vacantly wondering to himself whether Frank’s black coat would meet across his stomach, or whether the lower buttons and buttonholes were “dummies.” So that when Frank turned suddenly upon him he was, as it were, caught in the fact, and could only reply in a guilty whisper, “Mountain blue.”

“Will he talk?” asked Frank.

“Whistle,” says Black-hair, still in a whisper, and then, clearing his throat continued, in his natural tone, “Whistle beautiful. Black fellows gets ’em young out of the dead trees. I’ll give you this one if you’ve a mind.”

Frank couldn’t think of it; but could Black-hair get him a young cockatoo, and leave it with Mr. Sam Buckley for transmission?—would be exceedingly obliged.

Yes, Black-hair could. Thinks, too, what a pleasant sort of chap this parson was. "Will get him a cockatoo certainly."

Then Frank asks may he read them a bit out of the Bible, and neat man says they will be highly honoured. And Black-hair gets out of his bunk and sits listening in a decently respectful way. Opposition are by no means won over. The old hut-keeper sits sulkily smoking, and the yellow-haired man lies in his bunk with his back towards them. Lee had meanwhile come in, and, after recognitions from those inside, sat quietly down close to the door. Frank took for a text, "Servants, obey your masters," and preached them a sermon about the relations of master and servant, homely, plain, sensible and interesting, and had succeeded in awakening the whole attention and interest of the three who were listening, when the door was opened and a man looked in.

Lee was next the door, and cast his eyes upon the new comer. No sooner had their eyes met than he uttered a loud oath, and, going out with the stranger, shut the door after him.

"What can be the matter with our friend, I wonder?" asked Frank. "He seems much disturbed."

The neat man went to the door and opened it. Lee and the man who had opened the door were standing with their backs towards them, talking earnestly. Lee soon came back without a word, and, having caught

and saddled his horse, rode away with the stranger, who was on foot. He was a large, shabbily-dressed man, with black curly hair; this was all they could see of him, for his back was always towards them.

"Never saw Bill take on like that before," said the neat man. "'That's one of his old pals, I reckon. He ain't very fond of meeting any of 'em, you see, since he has been on the square. The best friends in prison, sir, are the worst friends out."

"Were you ever in prison, then?" said Frank.

"Lord bless you!" said the other, laughing, "I was lagged for forgery."

"I will make you another visit if I can," said Frank. "I am much obliged to you for the patience with which you heard me."

The other ran out to get his horse for him, and had it saddled in no time. "If you will send a parson round," he said, when Frank was mounted, "I will ensure him a hearing, and good bye, sir."

"And God speed you!" says Frank. But, lo! as he turned to ride away, Black-hair the sleepy-headed comes to the hut-door, looking important, and says, "Hi!" Frank is glad of this, for he likes the stupid-looking young fellow better than he fancied he would have done at first, and says to himself, "'There's the making of a man in that fellow, unless I am mistaken.'" So he turns politely to meet him, and, as he comes towards him, remarks what a fine, good-humoured young fellow he is,

Blackhair ranges alongside, and, putting his hand on the horse's neck, says, mysteriously—

“Would you like a native companion?”*

“Too big to carry, isn't it?” says Frank.

“I'll tie his wings together, and send him down on the ration dray,” says Black-hair. “You'll come round and see us again, will you?”

So Frank fares back to Toonarbin, wondering where Lee has gone. But Black-hair goes back into the hut, and taking his parrot from the bedplace, puts it on his shoulder, and sits rubbing his knees before the fire. Yellow-hair and the hut-keeper are now in loud conversation, and the former is asking, in a loud, authoritative tone (the neat man being outside), “whether a chap is to be hunted and badgered out of his bed by a parcel of — parsons?” To which Hut-keeper says, “No, by —! A man might as well be in barracks again.” Yellow-hair, morally comforted and sustained by this opinion, is proceeding to say, that, for his part, a parson is a useless sort of animal in general, who gets his living by frightening old women, but that this particular parson is an unusually offensive specimen, and that there is nothing in this world that he (Yellow-hair) would like better than to have him out in front of the house for five minutes, and see who was best man,—when Black-hair,

* A great crane, common in Australia. A capital pet, though dangerous among children; having that strange propensity common to all the cranes and herons, of attacking the eye.

usually a taciturn, peaceable fellow, astonishes the pair by turning his black eyes on the other, and saying, with lowering eyebrows,—

“You d——d humbug! Talk about fighting him! Always talking about fighting a chap when he is out of the way, when you know you’ve no more fight in you than a bronsewing. Why, he’d kill you, if you only waited for him to hit you! And see here: if you don’t stop your jaw about him, you’ll have to fight me, and that’s a little more than you’re game for, I’m thinking.”

This last was told me by the man distinguished above as “the neat man,” who was standing outside, and heard the whole.

But Frank arrived in due time at Toonarbin, and found all there much as he had left it, save that Mary Hawker had recovered her serenity, and was standing expecting him, with Charles by her side. Sam asked him, “Where was Lee?” and Frank, thinking more of other things, said he had left him at the hut, not thinking it worth while to mention the circumstance of his having been called out—a circumstance which became of great significance hereafter; for, though we never found out for certain who the man was, we came in the end to have strong suspicions.

However, as I said, all clouds had cleared from the Toonarbin atmosphere, and, after a pleasant meal, Frank, Major and Mrs. Buckley, Sam, and Charles

Hawker, rode home to Baroona under the forest arches, and reached the house in the gathering twilight.

The boys were staying behind at the stable as the three elders entered the darkened sitting-room. A figure was in one of the easy chairs by the fire—a figure which seemed familiar there, though the Major could not make out who it was until a well-known voice said,—

“Is that you, Buckley?”

It was the Doctor. They both welcomed him warmly home, and waited in the gloom for him to speak, but only saw that he had bent down his head over the fire.

“Are you ill, Doctor?” said Mrs. Buckley.

“Sound in wind and limb, my dear madam, but rather sad at heart. We have had some very severe black fighting, and we have lost a kind old friend—James Stockbridge.”

“Is he wounded, then?” said Mrs. Buckley.

“Dead.”

“Dead!”

“Speared in the side. Rolled off his horse, and was gone in five minutes.”

“Oh, poor James!” cried Mrs. Buckley. “He, of all men! The man who was their champion. To think that he, of all men, should end in that way!”

* * * * *

Charles Hawker rode home that night, and went into the room where his mother was. She was sitting sewing by the fire, and looked up to welcome him home.

“Mother,” said he, “there is bad news to tell. We have lost a good friend. James Stockbridge is killed by the blacks on the Macquarrie.”

She answered not a word, but buried her face in her hands, and very shortly rose and left the room. When she was alone, she began moaning to herself, and saying,—

“Some more fruit of the old cursed tree! If he had never seen me, he would have died at home, among his old friends, in a ripe, honoured old age.”

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN VINEYARD.

ON a summer's morning, almost before the dew had left the grass on the north side of the forest, or the belated opossum had gone to his nest, in fact just as the East was blazing with its brightest fire, Sam started off for a pleasant canter through the forest, to visit one of their out-station huts, which lay away among the ranges, and which was called, from some old arrangement, now fallen into disuse, "the heifer station."

There was the hut, seen suddenly down a beautiful green vista in the forest, the chimney smoking cheerily. "What a pretty contrast of colours!" says Sam, in a humour for enjoying everything. "Dark brown hut among the green shrubs, and blue smoke rising above all; prettily, too, that smoke hangs about the foliage this still morning, quite in festoons. There's Matt at the door!"

A lean long-legged clever-looking fellow, rather wide at the knees, with a brown complexion, and not unpleasant expression of face, stood before the door plaiting a cracker for his stockwhip. He looked pleased

when he saw Sam, and indeed it must be a surly fellow indeed, who did not greet Sam's honest phiz with a smile. Never a dog but wagged his tail when he caught Sam's eye.

"You're abroad early this morning, sir," said the man; "nothing the matter; is there, sir?"

"Nothing," said Sam, "save that one of Captain Brentwood's bulls is missing, and I came out to tell you to have an extra look round."

"I'll attend to it, sir."

"Hi! Matt," said Sam, "you look uncommonly smart."

Matt bent down his head, and laughed, in a rather sheepish sort of way.

"Well, you see, sir, I was coming into the home station to see if the Major could spare me for a few days."

"What, going a courting, eh? Well, I'll make that all right for you. Who is the lady,—eh?"

"Why, its Elsy Macdonald, I believe."

"Elsy Macdonald!" said Sam.

"Ay, yes, sir. I know what you mean, but she ain't like her sister; and that was more Mr. Charles Hawker's fault than her own. No; Elsy is good enough for me, and I'm not very badly off, and begin to fancy I would like some better sort of welcome in the evening than what a cranky old brute of a hut-keeper can give me. So I think I shall bring her home."

"I wish you well, Matt," said Sam; "I hope you are not going to leave us though."

"No fear, sir; Major Buckley is too good a master for that!"

"Well, I'll get the hut coopered up a bit for you, and you shall be as comfortable as circumstances will permit. Good morning."

"Good morning, sir; I hope I may see you happily married yourself some of these days."

Sam laughed, "that would be a fine joke," he thought, "but why shouldn't it be, eh? I suppose it must come some time or another. I shall begin to look out; I don't expect I shall be very easily suited. Heigh ho!"

I expect, however, Mr. Sam, that you are just in the state of mind to fall headlong in love with the first girl you meet with a nose on her face; let us hope, therefore, that she may be eligible.

But here is home again, and here is the father standing majestic and broad in the verandah, and the mother with her arm round his neck, both waiting to give him a hearty morning's welcome. And there is Doctor Mulhaus kneeling in spectacles before his new *Grevillea Victoria*, the first bud of which is just bursting into life; and the dogs catch sight of him and dash forward, barking joyfully; and as the ready groom takes his horse, and the fat housekeeper looks out all smiles, and retreats to send in breakfast, Sam thinks to himself, that he could not leave his home and people, not for the

best wife in broad Australia ; but then you see, he knew no better.

“ What makes my boy look so happy this morning ? ” asked his mother. “ Has the bay mare foaled, or have you negotiated James Brentwood’s young dog ? Tell us, that we may participate.”

“ None of these things have happened, mother ; but I feel in rather a holiday humour, and I’m thinking of going down to Garoopna this morning, and spending a day or two with Jim.”

“ I will throw a shoe after you for luck,” said his mother. “ See, the Doctor is calling you.”

Sam went to the Doctor, who was intent on his flower. “ Look here, my boy ; here is something new : the handsomest of the Grevilleas, as I live. It has opened since I was here.”

“ Ah ! ” said Sam, “ this is the one that came from the Quartz Ranges, last year ; is it not ? It has not flowered with you before.”

“ If Linnæus wept and prayed over the first piece of English furze which he saw,” said the Doctor, “ what everlasting smelling-bottle hysterics he would have gone into in this country ! I don’t sympathise with his tears much, though, myself ; though a new flower is a source of the greatest pleasure to me.”

“ And so you are going to Garoopna, Sam ? ” said his father, at breakfast. “ Have you heard, my dear, when the young lady is to come home ? ”

“Next month, I understand, my dear,” said Mrs. Buckley. “When she does come I shall go over and make her a visit.”

“What is her name, by-the-bye?” asked the Doctor.
“Alicie!”

So, behold Sam starting for his visit. The very Brummel of bush-dandies. Hunt might have made his well-fitting cord breeches, Hoby might have made those black top-boots, and Chifney might have worn them before royalty, and not been shamed. It is too hot for coat or waistcoat; so he wears his snow-white shirt, topped by a blue “bird’s-eye-handkerchief,” and keeps his coat in his valise, to be used as occasion shall require. His costume is completed with a cabbage-tree hat, neither too new nor too old; light, shady, well ventilated, and three pounds ten, the production, after months of labour, of a private in her Majesty’s Fortieth Regiment of Foot: not with long streaming ribands down his back, like a Pitt Street bully, but with short and modest ones, as became a gentleman,—altogether as fine a looking young fellow, as well dressed, and as well mounted too, as you will find on the country side.

Let me say a word about his horse, too; horse Widderin. None ever knew what that horse had cost Sam. The Major even had a delicacy about asking. I can only discover by inquiry that, at one time, about a year before this, there came to the Major’s a traveller, an Irishman by nation, who bored them all by talking about

a certain "Highflyer" colt, which had been dropped to a happy proprietor by his mare "Larkspur," among the Shoalhaven gullies; described by him as a colt the like of which was never seen before; as indeed he should be, for his sire Highflyer, as all the world knows, was bought up by a great Hunter-river horse-breeder from the Duke of C——; while his dam, Larkspur, had for grand-sire the great Bombshell himself. What more would you have than that, unless you would like to drive Veno in your dog-cart? However, it so happened that, soon after the Irishman's visit, Sam went away on a journey, and came back riding a new horse; which when the Major saw, he whistled, but discreetly said nothing. A very large colt it was, with a neck like a rainbow, set into a splendid shoulder, and a marvellous way of throwing his legs out;—very dark chestnut in colour, almost black, with longish ears, and an eye so full, honest, and impudent, that it made you laugh in his face. Widderin, Sam said, was his name, price and history being suppressed; called after Mount Widderin, to the northward there, whose loftiest sublime summit bends over like a horse's neck, with two peaked crags for ears. And the Major comes somehow to connect this horse with the Highflyer colt mentioned by our Irish friend, and observes that Sam takes to wearing his old clothes for a twelvemonth, and never seems to have any ready money. We shall see some day whether or no this horse will carry Sam ten miles, if required, on such direful emer-

gency, too, as falls to the lot of few men. However, this is all to come. Now in holiday clothes and in holiday mind, the two noble animals cross the paddock, and so down by the fence towards the river; towards the old gravel ford you may remember years ago. Here is the old flood, spouting and streaming as of yore, through the basalt pillars. There stand the three fern trees, too, above the dark scrub on the island. Now up the rock bank, and away across the breezy plains due North.

Brushing through the long grass tussocks, he goes his way singing, his dog Rover careering joyously before him. The horse is clearly for a gallop, but it is too hot to-day. The tall flat-topped volcanic hill which hung before him like a grey faint cloud, when he started, now rears its fluted columns overhead, and now is getting dim again behind him. But ere noon is high he once more hears the brawling river beneath his feet, and Garoopna is before him on the opposite bank.

The river, as it left Major Buckley's at Baroona, made a sudden bend to the west, a great arc, including with its minor windings nearly twenty-five miles, over the chord of which arc Sam had now been riding, making, from point to point, ten miles, or thereabouts. The Mayfords' station, also, lay to the left of him, being on the curved side of the arc, about five miles from Baroona. The reader may, if he please, remember this.

Garoopna was an exceedingly pretty station; in fact, one of the most beautiful I have ever seen. It stood

at a point where the vast forests which surround the mountains in a belt, from ten to twenty miles broad, run down into the plains and touch the river. As at Barooka, the stream runs in through a deep cleft in the table land, which here, though precipitous on the eastern bank, on the western breaks away into a small natural amphitheatre bordered by fine hanging woods just in advance of which, about two hundred yards from the river, stood the house, a long, low building densely covered with creepers of all sorts, and fronted by a beautiful garden. Right and left of it were the woolsheds, sheepyards, stockyards, men's huts, &c.; giving it almost the appearance of a little village; and behind the wooded ranges begin to rise, in some places broken beautifully by sheer scarps of grey rock. The forest crosses the river a little way, so Sam, gradually descending from the plains to cross, went the last quarter of a mile through a shady sandy forest tract, fringed with bracken, which leads down to a broad crossing place, where the river sparkles under tall over-arching red gums and box-trees; and then following the garden fence, found himself before a deep cool-looking porch, in a broad neatly-kept courtyard behind the house.

A groom* came out and took his horse. Rover has

* Do not let Bob or Tom, when they read this book in the sixteenth edition, before the harness-room stove, suppose that an Australian groom resembles in any way the very neat young man who follows the young ladies in their canters. The dirtiest helper at a university stable would come nearer the mark.

enough to do ; for there are three or four sheep dogs in the yard, who walk round him on tiptoe, slowly, with their frills out and their tails arched, growling. Rover, also, walks about on tiptoe, arches his tail, and growls with the best of them. He knows that the slightest mistake would be disastrous, and so manœuvres till he gets to the porch, where, a deal of gravel having been kicked backwards, in the same way as the ancients poured out their wine when they drank a toast, or else (as I think is more probable) as a symbol that animosities were to be buried, Rover is admitted as a guest, and Sam feels it safe to enter the house.

A cool, shady hall, hung round with coats, hats, stockwhips ; a gun in the corner, and on a slab, the most beautiful nosegay you can imagine. Remarkable that for a bachelor's establishment ;—but there is no time to think about it, for a tall, comfortable-looking housekeeper, whom Sam has never seen before, comes in from the kitchen and curtseys.

“Captain Brentwood not at home, is he?” said Sam.

“No, sir ! Away on the run with Mr. James.”

“Oh ! very well,” says Sam ; “I am going to stay a few days.”

“Very well, sir ; will you take anything before lunch?”

“Nothing, thank you.”

“Miss Alice is somewhere about sir. I expect her in every minute.”

“Miss Alice!” says Sam, astonished. “Is she come home?”

“Came home last week, sir. Will you walk in and sit down?”

Sam got his coat out of his valise, and went in. He wished that he had put on his plain blue necktie instead of the blue one with white spots. He would have liked to have worn his new yellow riding-trousers, instead of breeches and boots. He hoped his hair was in order, and tried to arrange his handsome brown curls without a glass, but, in the end, concluded that things could not be mended now, so he looked round the room.

What a charming room it was! A couple of good pictures, and several fine prints on the walls. Over the chimneypiece, a sword, and an old gold-laced cap, on which Sam looked with reverence. Three French windows opened on to a dark cool verandah, beyond which was a beautiful flower garden. The floor of the room, uncarpeted, shone dark and smooth, and the air was perfumed by vases of magnificent flowers, a hundred pounds worth of them, I should say, if you could have taken them to Covent-garden that December morning. But what took Sam’s attention more than anything was an open piano, in a shady recess, and on the keys a little fairy white glove.

“White kid gloves, eh, my lady?” says Sam; that don’t look well.” So he looked through the book-

shelves, and, having lighted on "Boswell's Johnson," proceeded into the verandah. A colley she-dog was lying at one end, who banged her tail against the floor in welcome, but was too utterly prostrated by the heat and by the persecution of her puppy to get up and make friends. The pup, however, a ball of curly black wool, with a brown-striped face, who was sitting on the top of her with his head on one side, seemed to conclude that a game of play was to be got out of Sam, and came blundering towards him; but Sam was, by this time, deep in a luxurious rocking-chair, so the puppy stopped half way, and did battle with a great black tarantula spider who happened to be abroad on business.

Sam went to the club with his immortal namesake, bullied Bennet Langton, argued with Beauclerk, put down Goldsmith, and extinguished Boswell. But it was too hot to read; so he let the book fall on his lap, and lay a-dreaming.

What a delicious verandah is this to dream in! Through the tangled passion-flowers, jessamines and magnolias, what a soft gleam of bright hazy distance, over the plains and far away! The deep river-glen cleaves the table-land, which, here and there, swells into breezy downs. Beyond, miles away to the north, is a great forest-barrier, above which there is a blaze of late snow, sending strange light aloft into the burning haze. All this is seen through an arch in the dark mass of

verdure which clothed the trellis-work, only broken through in this one place, as though to make a frame for the picture. He leans back, and gives himself up to watching trifles.

See here. A magpie comes furtively out of the house with a key in his mouth, and, seeing Sam, stops to consider if he is likely to betray him. On the whole he thinks not; so he hides the key in a crevice, and whistles a tune.

Now enters a cockatoo, waddling along comfortably and talking to himself. He tries to enter into conversation with the magpie, who, however, cuts him dead, and walks off to look at the prospect.

Flop, flop, a great foolish-looking kangaroo comes through the house and peers round him. The cockatoo addresses a few remarks to him, which he takes no notice of, but goes blundering out into the garden, right over the contemplative magpie, who gives him two or three indignant pecks on his clumsy feet, and sends him flying down the gravel walk.

Two bright-eyed little kangaroo rats come out of their box peering and blinking. The cockatoo finds an audience in them, for they sit listening to him, now and then catching a flea, or rubbing the backs of their heads with their fore-paws. But a buck 'possum, who stealthily descends by a pillar from unknown realms of mischief on the top of the house, evidently discredits cocky's stories, and departs down the garden to see if he can find something to eat.

An old cat comes up the garden walk, accompanied by a wicked kitten, who ambushes round the corner of the flowerbed, and pounces out on her mother, knocking her down and severely maltreating her. But the old lady picks herself up without a murmur, and comes into the verandah followed by her unnatural offspring, ready for any mischief. The kangaroo rats retire into their box, and the cockatoo, rather nervous, lays himself out to be agreeable.

But the puppy, born under an unlucky star, who has been watching all these things from behind his mother, thinks at last, "Here is some one to play with," so he comes staggering forth and challenges the kitten to a lark.

She receives him with every symptom of disgust and abhorrence; but he, regardless of all spitting, and tail swelling, rolls her over, spurring and swearing, and makes believe he will worry her to death. Her scratching and biting tell but little on his woolly hide, and he seems to have the best of it out and out, till a new ally appears unexpectedly, and quite turns the tables. The magpie hops up, ranges alongside of the combatants, and catches the puppy such a dig over the tail as sends him howling to his mother with a flea in his ear.

Sam lay sleepily amused by this little drama; then he looked at the bright green arch which separated the dark verandah from the bright hot garden. The arch was darkened, and looking he saw something which

made his heart move strangely, something that he has not forgotten yet, and never will.

Under the arch between the sunlight and the shade, bareheaded, dressed in white, stood a girl, so amazingly beautiful, that Sam wondered for a few moments whether he was asleep or awake. Her hat, which she had just taken off, hung on her left arm, and with her delicate right hand she arranged a vagrant tendril of the passion-flower, which in its luxuriant growth had broken bounds and fallen from its place above.—A girl so beautiful that I in all my life never saw her superior. They showed me the other day, in a carriage in the park, one they said was the most beautiful girl in England, a descendant of I know not how many noblemen. But, looking back to the times I am speaking of now, I said at once and decidedly, “Alice Brentwood twenty years ago was more beautiful than she.”

A Norman style of beauty, I believe you would call it. Light hair, deep brilliant blue eyes, and a very fair complexion. Beauty and high-bred grace in every limb and every motion. She stood there an instant on tiptoe, with the sunlight full upon her, while Sam, buried in gloom, had time for a delighted look, before she stepped into the verandah and saw him.

She floated towards him through the deep shadow. “I think,” she said in the sweetest, most musical little voice, “that you are Mr. Buckley. If so, you are a very

old friend of mine by report." So she held out her little hand, and with one bold kind look from the happy eyes, finished Sam for life.

Father and mother, retire into the chimney corner and watch. Your day is done. Doctor Mulhaus, put your good advice into your pocket and smoke your pipe. Here is one who can exert a greater power for good or evil than all of you put together. It was written of old,—“A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his ——” Hallo! I am getting on rather fast, I am afraid.

He had risen to meet her. “And you, Miss Brentwood,” he said, “are tolerably well known to me. Do you know now that I believe by an exertion of memory I could tell you the year and the month when you began to learn the harp? My dear old friend Jim has kept me quite *au fait* with all your accomplishments.”

“I hope you are not disappointed in me,” said Alice, laughing.

“No,” said Sam. “I think rather the contrary. Are you?”

“I have not had time to tell yet,” she said. “I will see how you behave at lunch, which we shall have in half an hour *tête-a-tête*. You have been often here before, I believe? Do you see much change?”

“Not much. I noticed a new piano, and a little glove that I had never seen before. Jim’s menagerie o

wild beasts is as numerous as ever, I see. He would have liked to be in Noah's Ark."

"And so would you and I, Mr. Buckley," she answered, laughing, "if we had been caught in the flood."

Good gracious! Think of being in Noah's Ark with her.

"You find them a little troublesome, don't you, Miss Brentwood?"

"Well, it requires a good deal of administrative faculty to keep the kitten and the puppy from open collision, and to prevent the magpie from pecking out the cockatoo's eye and hiding it in the flower bed. Last Sunday morning he (the magpie) got into my father's room, and stole thirty-one shillings and sixpence. We got it all back but half a sovereign, and that we shall never see."

The bird thus alluded to broke into a gush of melody, so rich, full, and metallic, that they both turned to look at him. Having attracted attention, he began dancing, crooning a little song to himself, as though he would say, "I know where it is." And lastly he puffed out his breast, put back his bill, and swore two or three oaths that would have disgraced a London scavenger, with such remarkable distinctness too, that there was no misunderstanding him; so Sam's affectation of not having caught what the bird said, was a dead failure.

"Mr. Buckley," said she, "if you will excuse me I will go and see about lunch. Can you amuse yourself there for half an hour?" Well, he would try. So he retired again to the rocking-chair, about ten years older than when he rose from it. For he had grown from a boy into a man.

He had fallen over head and ears in love, and all in five minutes, fallen deeply, seriously in love, to the exclusion of all other sublunary matters, before he had well had time to notice whether she spoke with an Irish brogue or a Scotch (happily she did neither). Sudden, you say: well, yes; but in lat. 34° , and lower, whether in the southern or northern hemisphere, these sort of affairs come on with a rapidity and violence only equalled by the thunder-storms of those regions, and utterly surprising to you who perhaps read this book in 52° north, or perhaps higher. I once went to a ball with as free-and-easy, heart-whole a young fellow as any I know, and agreed with him to stay half an hour, and then come away and play pool. In twenty-five minutes by my watch, which keeps time like a ship's chronometer, that man was in the tragic or cut-throat stage of the passion with a pretty little thing of forty, a cattle-dealer's widow, who stopped *his* pool-playing for a time, until she married the great ironmonger in George Street. Romeo and Juliet's little matter was just as sudden, and very Australian in many points. Only mind, that

Romeo, had he lived in Australia, instead of taking poison, would probably have

“Took to drinking ratafia, and thought of poor Miss Baily,”

for full twenty-four hours after the catastrophe.

At least such would have been the case in many instances, but not in all. With some men these suddenly-conceived passions last their lives, and, I should be inclined to say longer, were there not strong authority against it.

But Sam? He saw the last twinkle of her white gown disappear, and then leant back and tried to think. He could only say to himself, “By Jove, I wonder if I can ever bring her to like me. I wish I had known she was here; I’d have dressed myself better. She is a precious superior girl. She might come to like me in time. Heigh ho!”

The idea of his having a rival, or of any third person stepping in between him and the young lady to whom he had thrown his handkerchief, never entered into his Sultanship’s head. Also, when he came to think about it, he really saw no reason why she should not be brought to think well of him. “As well me as another,” said he to himself; “that’s where it is. She must marry somebody, you know!”

Why was she gone so long? He begins to doubt whether he has not after all been asleep and dreaming. There she comes again, however, for the arch under the

creepers is darkened again, and he looks up with a pleasant smile upon his face to greet her.

"God save us! What imp's trick is this? There, in the porch, in the bright sun, where she stood not an hour ago in all her beauty and grace, stands a hideous, old savage, black as Tophet, grinning; showing the sharp gap-teeth in her apish jaws, her lean legs shaking with old age and rheumatism.

The colley shakes out her frill, and, raising the hair all down her back, stands grinning and snarling, while her puppy barks pot-valiantly between her legs. The little kangaroo rats ensconce themselves once more in their box, and gaze out amazed from their bright little eyes. The cockatoo hooks and clambers up to a safe place in the trellis, and Sam, after standing thunder-struck for a moment, asks, what she wants?

"Make a light,"* says the old girl, in a pathetic squeak. Further answer she makes none, but squats down outside, and begins a petulant whine: sure sign that she has a tale of woe to unfold, and is going to ask for something.

"Can that creature," thinks Sam, "be of the same species as the beautiful Alice Brentwood? Surely not! There seems as much difference between them as between an angel and an ordinary good woman." Hard to believe, truly, Sam: but perhaps, in some of the

"Make a light," in blackfellow's gibberish, means simply "See." Here it means, "I'm only come to see how you are getting on," or something of that sort.

great European cities, or even nearer home, in some of the prison barracks, you may chance to find a white woman or two fallen as low as that poor, starved, ill-treated, filthy old savage !

Alice comes out once more, and brings sunshine with her. She goes up to the old lubra with a look of divine compassion on her beautiful face ; the old woman's whine grows louder as she rocks herself to and fro. "Yah marah, Yah boorah, Oh boora Yah ! Yah Ma !"

"What ! old Sally !" says the beautiful girl. "What is the matter ? Have you been getting waddy again ?"

"Baal !" says she, with a petulant burst of grief.

"What is it, then ?" says Alice. "Where is the gown I gave you ?"

Alice had evidently vibrated the right chord. The "Yarah Moorah" coronach was begun again ; and then suddenly, as if her indignation had burst bounds, she started off with a shrillness and rapidity astonishing to one not accustomed to black-fellows, into something like the following : "Oh Yah (very loud), oh Mah ! Barkmaburrawurrah, Barkmamurrahwurrah, Oh Ya Barkmanurrawah Yee (in a scream. Then a pause). Oh Mooroo (pause). Oh hinaray (pause). Oh Barknamururrah Yee !"

Alice looked as if she understood every word of it, and waited till the poor old soul had "blown off the steam," and then asked again :

"And what has become of the gown, Sally ?"

"Oh dear ! Young lubra Betty (big thief that

one) tear it up and stick it along a fire. Oh, plenty cold this old woman. Oh, plenty hungry this old woman. Oh, Yarah Moorah," &c.

"There! go round to the kitchen," said Alice, "and get something to eat. Is it not abominable, Mr. Buckley? I cannot give anything to this old woman but the young lubras take it from her. However, I will 'put the screw on them.' They shall have nothing from me till they treat her better. It goes to my heart to see a woman of that age, with nothing to look forward to but kicks and blows. I have tried hard to make her understand something of the next world: but I can't get it out of her head that when she dies she will go across the water and come back a young white woman with plenty of money. Mr. Sandford, the missionary, says he has never found one who could be made to comprehend the existence of God. However, I came to call you to lunch; will you give me your arm?"

Such a self-possessed, intrepid little maiden, not a bit afraid of him, but seeming to understand and trust him so thoroughly. Not all the mock-modesty and blushing in the world would have won him half so surely, as did her bold, quiet, honest look. Although a very young man, and an inexperienced, Sam could see what a candid, honest, gentle soul looked at him from those kind blue eyes; and she, too, saw something in Sam's broad noble face which attracted her marvellously, and

in all innocence she told him so, plump and plain, as they were going into the house.

"I fancy I shall like you very much, Mr. Buckley. We ought to be good friends, you know; your father saved the lives of my father and uncle."

"I never heard of that before," said Sam.

"I dare say not," said Alice. "Your father is not the man to speak of his own noble deeds; yet he ran out of his square and pulled my father and uncle almost from under the hoofs of the French cavalry at Waterloo. It makes my cheeks tingle to tell of it now."

Indeed it did. Sam thought that if it brought such a beautiful flush to her face, and such a flash from her eyes, whenever she told it, that he would get her to tell it again more than once.

But hunch! Don't let us starve our new pair of turtle-doves, in the outset. Sam is but a growing lad; and needs carbon for his muscles, lime for his bones, and all that sort of thing; a glass of wine won't do him any harm either, and let us hope that his new passion is not of such lamentable sort as to prevent his using a knife and fork with credit and satisfaction to himself.

Here, in the dark, cool parlour, stands a banquet for the gods, white damask, pretty bright china, and clean silver. In the corner of the table is a frosted claret-jug, standing, with freezing politeness, upright, his hand on his hip, waiting to be poured out. In the centre, the grandfather of watermelons, half-hidden by peaches and

pomegranates, the whole heaped over by a confusion of ruby cherries (oh, for Lance to paint it!) Are you hungry, though? If so, here is a mould of potted-head and a cold wild duck, while, on the sideboard, I see a bottle of pale ale. My brother, let us breakfast in Scotland, lunch in Australia, and dine in France, till our lives' end.

And the banquet being over, she said, as pleasantly as possible, "Now, I know you want to smoke in the verandah. For my part, I should like to bring my work there and sit with you, but, if you had rather not have me, you have only to say that 'you could not think,' &c. &c., and I will obediently take myself off."

But Sam didn't say that. He said that he couldn't conceive anything more delightful, if she was quite sure she did not mind.

Not she, indeed! So she brought her work out, and they sat together. A cool wind came up, bending the flowers, swinging the creepers to and fro, and raising a rushing sound, like the sea, from the distant forest. The magpie having been down the garden when the wind came on, and having been blown over, soon joined them in a very captious frame of mind; and, when Alice dropped a ball of red worsted, he seized it as lawful prize, and away in the house with a hop and a flutter. So both Sam and Alice had to go after him, and hunt him under the sofa, and the bird, finding that he must yield, dropped the ball suddenly, and gave Sam two

vicious digs on the fingers to remember him by. But when Alice just touched his hand in taking it from him, he wished it had been a whipsnake instead of a magpie.

So the ball of worsted was recovered, and they sat down again. He watched her nimble fingers on the delicate embroidery; he glanced at her quiet face and down-turned eyelids, wondering who she was thinking of. Suddenly she raised her eyes and caught him in the fact. You could not swear she blushed; it might only be a trifling reflection from one of the red China roses that hung between her and the sun; yet, when she spoke, it was not quite with her usual self-possession; a little hurriedly perhaps.

"Are you going to be a soldier, as your father was?"

Sam had thought for an instant of saying "yes," and then to prove his words true of going to Sydney, and enlisting in the "Half Hundred." Truth, however, prompting him to say "no," he compromised the matter by saying he had not thought of it.

"I am rather glad of that, do you know," she said. "Unless in India, now, a man had better be anything than a soldier. I am afraid my brother Jim will be begging for a commission some day. I wish he would stay quietly at home."

That was comforting. He gave up all thoughts of enlisting at once. But now the afternoon shadows were beginning to slant longer and longer, and it was nearly

time that the Captain and Jim should make their appearance. So Alice proposed to walk out to meet them, and, as Sam did not say no, they went forth together.

Down the garden, faint with the afternoon scents of the flowers before the western sun, among petunias and roses, oleander and magnolia; here a towering Indian lily, there a thicket of scarlet geranium and fuschia. By shady young orange trees, covered with fruit and blossom, between rows of trellissed vines, bearing rich promise of a purple vintage. Among fig trees and pomegranates, and so leaving the garden, along the dry slippery grass, towards the hoarse rushing river, both silent till they reached it. There is a silence that is golden.

They stood gazing on the foaming tide an instant, and then Alice said,—

“My father and Sam will come home by the track across there. Shall we cross and meet them? We can get over just below.”

A little lower down, all the river was collected into one headlong race; and a giant tree, undermined by winter floods, had fallen from one bank to the other, offering a giddy footway across the foaming water.

“Now,” said Alice, “if you will go over, I will follow you.”

So he ran across, and then looked back to see the beautiful figure tripping fearlessly over, with out-

stretched arms, and held out his great brown hand to take her tiny fingers as she stepped down from the upturned roots on to the soft white sand. He would like to have taken them again, to help her up the bank, but she sprang up like a deer, and would not give him the opportunity. Then they had a merry laugh at the magpie, who had fluttered down all this way before them, to see if they were on a foraging expedition, and if there were any plunder going, and now could not summon courage to cross the river, but stood crooning and cursing by the brink. Then they sauntered away, side by side, along the sandy track, among the knolls of braken, with the sunlit boughs whispering knowingly to one another in the evening breeze as they passed beneath.—An evening walk long remembered by both of them.

“Oh see ye not that pleasant road,
That winds along the ferny brae?
Oh that's the road to fairy land,
Where thou and I this e'en must gae.”

“And so you cannot remember England, Mr. Buckley?” says Alice.

“Oh dear, no. Stay though, I am speaking too fast. I can remember some few places. I remember a steep, red road, that led up to the church, and have some dim recollection of a vast grey building, with a dark porch, which must have been the church itself. I can see too,

at this moment, a broad green flat, beside a creek, which was covered with yellow and purple flowers, which mother and I made into nosegays. That must be the place my father speaks of as the Hatherleigh Meadows, where he used to go fishing, and, although I must have been there often, yet I can only remember it on one occasion, when he emptied out a basket of fish on the grass for me to look at. My impression of England is, that everything was of a brighter colour than here; and they tell me I am right."

"A glorious country," said Alice; "what would I give to see it?—so ancient and venerable, and yet so amazingly young and vigorous. It seems like a waste of existence for a man to stay here tending sheep, when his birthright is that of an Englishman: the right to move among his peers, and find his fit place in the greatest empire in the world. Never had any woman such a noble destiny before her as this young lady who has just ascended the throne."

But the conversation changed here, and her Majesty escaped criticism for the time. They came to an open space in the forest, thickly grown with thickets of bracken fern, prickly acacia, and here and there a solitary dark-foliaged lightwood. In the centre rose a few blackened posts, the supports of what had once been a hut, and as you looked, you were surprised to see an English rose or two, flowering among the dull-coloured prickly shrubs, which were growing around.

A place, as any casual traveller would have guessed, which had a history, and Sam, seeing Alice pause, asked her, "what old hut was this?"

"This," she said, "is the Donovans' old station, where they were burnt out by the blacks."

Sam knew the story well enough, but he would like to hear her tell it; so he made believe to have heard some faint reports of the occurrence, and what could she do, but give him the particulars?

"They had not been here a year," she said; "and Mrs. Donovan had been confined only three days; there was not a soul on the station but herself, her son Murtagh, and Miss Burke. All day the blackfellows were prowling about, and getting more and more insolent, and at night, just as Murtagh shut the door, they raised their yell, and rushed against it. Murtagh Donovan and Miss Burke had guessed what was coming all day, but had kept it from the sick woman, and now, when the time came, they were cool and prepared. They had two double-barrelled guns loaded with slugs, and with these they did such fearful execution from two loop-holes they had made in the slabs, that the savages quickly retired; but poor Miss Burke, incautiously looking out to get a shot, received a spear wound on her shoulder, which she bears the mark of to this day. But the worst was to come. The blackfellows mounted on the roof, tried to take off the bark, and throw their spears into the hut, but here

they were foiled again. Wherever a sheet of bark was seen to move they watched, and on the first appearance of an enemy, a charge of shot at a few yards' distance told with deadly effect. Mrs. Donovan, who lay in bed and saw the whole, told my father that Lesbia Burke loaded and fired with greater rapidity and precision than her cousin. A noble woman, I say."

"Good old Lesbia!" said Sam; "and how did it end?"

"Why, the foolish blacks fired the woolshed, and brought the Delisles upon them; they tried to fire the roof of the hut, but it was raining too hard; otherwise it would have gone hard with poor Miss Burke. See, here is a peach-tree they planted, covered with fruit; let us gather some; it is pretty good, for the Donovans have kept it pruned in memory of their escape."

"But the hut was not burnt," said Sam; "where did it stand?"

"That pile of earth there, is the remains of the old turf chimney. They moved across the river after it happened."

But peaches, when they grow on a high tree, must be climbed for, particularly if a young and pretty girl expresses a wish for them. And so it fell out, that Sam was soon astride of one of the lower boughs, throwing the fruit down to Alice, who put them one by one into the neatest conceivable little basket that hung on her arm.

And so they were employed, busy and merry, when they heard a loud cheery voice, which made both of them start.

"Quite a scene from 'Paradise Lost,' I declare; only Eve ought to be up the tree handing down the apples to Adam, and not *vice versa*. I miss a carpet snake, too, who would represent the D——, and make the thing complete.—Sam Buckley, how are you?"

It was Captain Brentwood who had come on them so inaudibly along the sandy track, on horseback, and beside him was son Jim, looking rather mischievously at Sam, who did not show to the best of advantage up in the peach-tree; but, having descended, and greetings being exchanged, father and son rode on to dress for dinner, the hour for which was now approaching, leaving Sam and Alice to follow at leisure, which they did; for Captain Brentwood and Jim had time to dress and meet in the verandah, before they saw the pair come sauntering up the garden.

"Father," said Jim, taking the Captain's hand, "How would that do?"

"Marvellous well, I should say;" replied the Captain.

"And so I think, too," said Jim. "Hallo! you two; dinner is ready, so look sharp."

After dinner the Captain retired silently to the chimney-corner, and read his book, leaving the three young people to amuse themselves as they would. Nothing the Captain liked so much as quiet, while he

read some abstruse work on Gunnery, or some scientific voyage; but I am sorry to say he had got very little quiet of an evening since Alice came home, and Jim had got some one to chatter to. This evening, however, seemed to promise well, for Alice brought out a great book of coloured prints, and the three sat down to turn them over, Jim of course, you know, being in the middle.

The book was "Wild Sports of the East," a great volume of coloured lithographs, worth some five-and-twenty guineas. One never sees such books as that now-a-days, somehow; people, I fancy, would not pay that price for them. What modern travels have such plates as the old editions of "Cook's Voyages"? The number of illustrated books is increased tenfold, but they are hardly improved in quality.

But Sam, I think, would have considered any book beautiful in such company. "This," said Alice, "is what we call the 'Tiger Book'—why, you will see directly.—You turn over, Jim, and don't crease the pages."

So Jim turned over, and kept them laughing by his simple remarks, more often affected than real, I suspect. Now they went through the tangled jungle, and seemed to hear the last mad howl of the dying tiger, as the elephant knelt and pinned him to the ground with his tusks. Now they chased a lordly buffalo from his damp lair in the swamp; now they saw the English officers flying along on their Arabs through the high grass with well-poised spears after the snorting hog. They have

come unexpectedly on a terrible old tiger ; one of the horses swerves, and a handsome young man, losing his seat, seems just falling into the monster's jaws, while the pariah dogs scud away terrified through the grass.

"That chap will be eaten immediately," says Jim.

"He has been in that position ever since I can remember," says Alice ; "so I think he is pretty safe."

Now they are with the British army on the march. A scarlet bar stretches across the plain, of which the further end is lost in the white mirage—all in order, walking irresistibly on to the conquest of an empire greater than Haroun Al Raschid's, so naturally done, that as you look, you think you see the columns swing as they advance, and hear the heavy, weary tramp of the troops above the din and shouting of the cloud of camp-followers, on camels and elephants, which surrounds them. Beyond the plain the faint blue hills pierce the grey air, barred with a few long white clouds, and far away a gleaming river winds through a golden country, spanned with long bridges, and fringed with many a fantastic minaret.

"How I should like to see that !" said Alice.

"Would you like to be a countess," said Jim, "and ride on an elephant in a howitzer?"

"Howdah, you goose !" said Alice. "Besides, that is not a countess ; that is one of the soldiers' wives. Countesses don't go to India ; they stay at home to mind the Queen's clothes."

"What a pleasant job for them," said Jim, "when her Most Gracious Majesty has got the toothache! I wonder whether she wears her crown under her bonnet or over it?"

Captain Brentwood looked up. "My dear boy," he said, "does it not strike you that you are talking nonsense?"

"Did you ever see the old King, father?" said Jim.

"I saw King George the Third many times."

"Ah, but I mean to speak to him."

"Once only, and then he was mad. He was sitting up with her Majesty, waiting for intelligence which I brought. His Royal Highness took the despatches from me, but the King insisted on seeing me."

"And what did he say, father? Do tell us," said Alice eagerly.

"Little enough, my love," said the Captain, leaning back. "He asked, 'Is this the officer who brought the despatches, York?' And his Royal Highness said 'Yes.' Then the King said, 'You bring good news, sir; I was going to ask you some questions, but they are all gone out of my head. Go and get your supper; get your supper, sir.' Poor old gentleman. He was a kindly old man, and I had a great respect for him. Alice, sing us a song, my love."

She sang them "The Burial of Sir John Moore" with such perfect taste and pathos that Sam felt as if the candle had gone out when she finished. Then she

turned round and said to him, "You ought to like that song ; your father was one of the actors in it."

"He has often told me the story," said Sam, "but I never knew what a beautiful one it was till I heard you sing it."

All pleasant evenings must end, and at last she rose to go to bed. But Sam, before he went off to the land of happy dreams, saw that the little white glove which he had noticed in the morning was lying neglected on the floor ; so he quietly secured and kept it. And, last year, opening his family Bible to refer to certain entries, now pretty numerous, in the beginning ; I found a little white glove pinned to the fly-leaf, which I believe to be the same glove here spoken of.

CHAPTER XI.

A GENTLEMAN FROM THE WARS.

I NEED hardly say that Sam was sorry when the two days which he had allowed himself for his visit were over. But that evening, when he mentioned the fact that he was going away in the morning, the Captain, Alice, and Jim, all pressed him so eagerly to stay another week, that he consented; the more as there was no earthly reason he knew of why he should go home.

And the second morning from that on which he should have been at home, going out to the stable before breakfast, he saw his father come riding over the plain, and, going to meet him, found that he, too, meditated a visit to the Captain.

"I thought you were come after me, father," said Sam. "By the bye, do you know that the Captain's daughter, Miss Alice, is come home?"

"Indeed!" said the Major; "and what sort of a body is she?"

"Oh, she is well enough. Something like Jim. Plays very well on the piano, and all that sort of thing, you know. Sings too."

"Is she pretty?" asked the Major.

"Oh, well, I suppose she is," said Sam. "Yes; I should say that a great many people would consider her pretty."

They had arrived at the door, and the groom had taken the Major's horse, when Alice suddenly stepped out and confronted them.

The Major had been prepared to see a pretty girl, but he was by no means prepared for such a radiant, lovely, blushing creature as stepped out of the darkness into the fresh morning to greet him, clothed in white, bareheaded, with

"A single rose in her hair."

As he told his wife, a few days after, he was struck "all of a heap;" and Sam heard him whisper to himself, "By Jove!" before he went up to Alice and spoke.

"My dear young lady, you and I ought not to be strangers, for I recognise you from my recollections of your mother. Can you guess who I am?"

"I recognise you from my recollections of your son, sir," said Alice, with a sly look at Sam; "I should say that you were Major Buckley."

The Major laughed, and, taking her hand, carried it to his lips: a piece of old-fashioned courtesy she had never experienced before, and which won her heart amazingly.

"Come, come, Buckley!" said the quiet voice of

Captain Brentwood from the dark passage; "what are you at there with my daughter? I shall have to call out and fight some of you young fellows yet, I see."

Alice went in past her father, stopping to give him a kiss, and disappeared into the breakfast-room. The Captain came out, and shook hands warmly with the Major, and said,

"What do you think of her,—eh?"

"I never saw such beauty before," answered the Major; "never, by Jove! I tell you what, Brentwood, I wish she could come out this season in London. Why, she might marry a duke."

"Let us get her a rouge-pot and a French governess, and send her home by the next ship; eh, Buckley?" said the Captain, with his most sardonic smile. "She would be the better for a little polishing; wouldn't she, eh? Too hoydenish and forward, I am afraid; too fond of speaking the truth. Let's have her taught to amble, and mince, and——Bah, come to breakfast!"

The Major laughed heartily at this tirade of the Captain's. He was fond of teasing him, and I believe the Captain liked to be teased by him.

"And what are you three going to do with yourselves to-day, eh?" asked the Captain at breakfast. "It is a matter of total indifference to me, so long as you take yourselves off somewhere, and leave me in peace."

Alice was spokesman:—"We are going up to the

Limestone Gates; Mr. Samuel Buckley has expressed a desire to see them, and so Jim and I thought of taking him there."

This was rather a jesuitical speech. The expedition to the Limestone Gates involved a long ride through very pretty scenery, which she herself had proposed. As for Sam, bless you! he didn't care whether they rode east, west, north, or south, so long as he rode beside her; however, having got his cue, he expressed a strong wish to examine, geologically, the great band of limestone which alternated with the slate towards the mountains, the more particularly as he knew that the Captain and the Major intended to ride out in another direction, to examine some new netting for sheep-yards which the Captain had imported.

If Major Buckley thought Alice beautiful as he had seen her in the morning, he did not think her less so when she was seated on a beautiful little horse, which she rode gracefully and courageously, in a blue riding-habit, and a sweet little grey hat with a plume of companion's feathers hanging down on one side. The cockatoo was on the door-step to see her start, and talked so incessantly in his excitement, that even when the magpie assaulted him and pulled a feather out of his tail, he could not be quiet. Sam's horse Widderin capered with delight, and Sam's dog Rover coursed far and wide before them, with joyful bark. So they three went off through the summer's day as happy as though

all life were one great summer's holiday, and there were no storms below the horizon to rise and overwhelm them; through the grassy flat, where the quail whirred before them, and dropped again as if shot; across the low rolling forest land, where a million parrots fled whistling to and fro, like jewels, in the sun; past the old stock-yard, past the sheep-wash hut, and then through forest which grew each moment more dense and lofty, along the faint and narrow track which led into one of the most abrupt and romantic gullies which pierce the Australian Alps.

All this became classic ground to them afterwards, and the causes which made it so were now gathering to their fulfilment, even now, while these three were making happy holiday together, little dreaming of what was to come. Afterwards, years after, they three came and looked on this valley again; not as now, with laughter and jokes, but silently, speaking in whispers, as though they feared to wake the dead.

The road they followed, suddenly rising from the forest, took over the shoulder of a rocky hill, and then, plunging down again, followed a little running creek up to where a great ridge of slate, crossing the valley, hemmed them in on either side, leaving only room for the creek and the road. Following it further, the glen opened out, sweeping away right and left in broad curves, while straight before them, a quarter of a mile distant, there rose out of the low scrub and fern a

mighty wall of limestone, utterly barring all further progress save in a single spot to the left, where the vast grey wall was split, giving a glimpse of another glen beyond. This great natural cleft was the limestone gate which they had come to see, and which was rendered the more wonderful by a tall pinnacle of rock, which stood in the centre of the gap about 300 feet in height, not unlike one of the same kind in Dovedale.

"I don't think I ever saw anything so beautiful," said Alice. "How fine that spire of rock is, shooting up from the feathered shrubs at the base! I will come here some day and try to draw it."

"Wait a minute," said Jim; "you have not seen half yet."

He led them through the narrow pass, among the great boulders which lined the creek. The instant they came beyond, a wind, icy cold, struck upon their cheeks, and Alice, dropping her reins, uttered a cry of awe and wonder, and Sam too exclaimed aloud; for before them, partly seen through crowded tree stems, and partly towering above the forest, lay a vast level wall of snow, flecked here and there by the purple shadow of some flying summer cloud.

A sight so vast and magnificent held them silent for a little; then suddenly, Jim, looking at Alice, saw that she was shivering.

"What is the matter, Alice, my dear?" he said; "let us come away; the snow-wind is too much for you."

"Oh! it is not that!" she said. "Somebody is walking over my grave."

"Oh, that's all!" said Jim; "they are always at it with me, in cold weather. Let 'em. It won't hurt, that I know of."

But they turned homeward nevertheless; and coming through the rock walls again, Jim said,

"Sam, what was that battle the Doctor and you were reading about one day, and you told me all about it afterwards, you know?"

"Malplacquet?"

"No; something like that, though. Where they got bailed up among the rocks, you know, and fought till they were all killed."

"Thermopylæ?"

"Ah! This must be just such another place, I should think."

"Thermopylæ was by the sea-shore," said Alice.

"Now, I should imagine," said Sam, pointing to the natural glacis formed by the decay of the great wall which they had seen fronting them as they came up, "that a few determined men with rifles, posted among those fern-trees, could make a stand against almost any force."

"But, Sam," said Jim, "they might be cut up by cavalry. Horses could travel right up the face of the slope there. Now, suppose a gang of bushrangers in that fern-scrub; do you think an equal number of police

could not turn them out of it? Why, I have seen the place where Moppy's gang turned and fought Desborough on the Macquarrie. It was stronger than this, and yet—you know what he did with them, only kept one small one for hanging, as he elegantly expressed it."

"But I ain't talking of bushrangers," said Sam. "I mean such fellows as the Americans in the War of Independence. See what a dance they led our troops with their bushfighting."

"I wonder if there will ever be a War of Independence here," said Alice."

"I know which side I should be on, if there was," said Sam.

"Which would that be?" asked Jim.

"My dear friend," said Sam, testily, "how can you, an officer's son, ask me, an officer's son, such a question? The King's (I beg pardon, the Queen's) side, of course."

"And so would I," said Jim, "if it came to that, you know."

"You would never have the honour of speaking to your sweet sister again, if you were not," said Alice.

"But I don't think those Americans were in the wrong; do you, Miss Brentwood?" said Sam.

"Why no; I don't suppose that such a man as General Washington, for instance, would have had much to do with them if they had been."

"However," said Sam, "we are talking of what will never occur here. To begin with, we could never stand alone against a great naval power. They would shut us up here to starve. We have everything to lose, and nothing to gain by a separation. I would hardly like myself, for the sake of a few extra pounds taxes, to sell my birthright as an Englishman."

"Conceive," said Alice, "being in some great European city, and being asked if you were British, having to say, No!"

They were coming through the lower pass, and turned to look back on the beautiful rock-walled amphitheatre, sleeping peaceful and still under the afternoon sun. The next time (so it happened) that Sam and Jim looked at that scene together, was under very different circumstances. Now the fronds of the fern-trees were scarce moved in the summer's breeze, and all was silent as the grave. They saw it again;—when every fern tuft blazed with musketry, and the ancient cliffs echoed with the shouts of fighting, and the screams of dying men and horses.

"It is very early," said Alice. "Let us ride to the left, and see the great waterfall you speak of, Jim."

It was agreed. Instead of going home they turned through the forest, and debouched on the plains about two miles above Garoopna, and, holding their course to the river, came to it at a place where a great trap dike, crossing, formed a waterfall, over which the river,

now full with melting snow, fell in magnificent confusion. They stood watching the grand scene with delight for a short time, and then, crossing the river by a broad, shallow ford, held their way homeward, along the eastern and more level bank, sometimes reining up their horses to gaze into the tremendous glen below them, and watch the river crawling on through many impediments, and beginning to show a golden light in its larger pools beneath the sloping, westering sun.

Just as they sighted home, on the opposite side of the river, they perceived two horsemen before them, evidently on the track between Major Buckley's and Garoopna. They pushed on to "overhaul them," and found that it was Doctor Mulhaus, whom they received with boisterous welcome, and a tall, handsome young gentleman, a stranger.

"A young gentleman, Sam," said the Doctor, "Mr. Halbert by name, who arrived during your father's absence with letters of introduction. I begged him to follow your father over here, and, as his own horse was knocked up, I mounted him at his own request on Jezebel, he preferring her to all the horses in the paddock on account of her beauty, after having been duly warned of her wickedness. But Mr. Halbert seems of the Centaur species, and rather to enjoy an extra chance of getting his neck broke."

Politeness to strangers was one of the first articles

of faith in the Buckley and Brentwood families; so the young folks were soon on the best of terms.

"Are you from Sydney way, Mr. Halbert?" said Sam.

"Indeed," said the young man, "I have only landed in the country six weeks. I have got three years' leave of absence from my regiment in India, and, if I can see a chance, I shall cut the army and settle here."

"Oh!" said Alice, "are you a soldier, Mr. Halbert?"

"I have that honour, Miss Brentwood. I am a lieutenant in the Bengal Horse Artillery."

"That is delightful. I am a soldier's daughter, and Mr. Buckley here also, as you know, I suppose."

"A soldier's daughter, is he?" said impudent Jim.

"A very fine girl too!"

Sam, and Jim too, had some disrespectful ideas about soldiers' riding qualities; Sam could not help saying,—

"I hope you will be careful with that mare, Mr. Halbert; I should not like a guest of ours to be damaged. She's a desperate brute,—I'm afraid of her myself."

"I think I know the length of her ladyship's foot," said Halbert, laughing good-naturedly.

As they were speaking, they were passing through a narrow way in a wattle scrub. Suddenly a blundering kangaroo, with Rover in full chase, dashed right under the mare's nose and set her plunging furiously. She tried to wheel round, but, finding herself checked, reared

up three or four times, and at last seemed to stand on her hind legs, almost overbalancing herself.

Halbert sat like a statue till he saw there was a real chance of her falling back on him; then he slipped his right foot quickly out of the stirrup, and stood with his left toe in the iron, balancing himself till she was quieter; then he once more threw his leg across the saddle, and regained his seat, laughing.

Jim clapped his hands; "By Jove, Sam, we must get some of these army men to teach us to ride, after all!"

"We must do so," said Sam. "If that had been you or I, Jim, with our rough clumsy hands, we should have had the mare back atop of us."

"Indeed," said Alice, "you are a splendid rider, Mr. Halbert: but don't suppose, from Mr. Buckley's account of himself, that he can't ride well; I assure you we are all very proud of him. He can sit some bucking horses which very few men will attempt to mount."

"And that same bucking, Miss Brentwood," said Halbert, "is just what puzzles me utterly. I got on a bucking horse in Sydney the other day, and had an ignominious tumble in the sale-yard, to everybody's great amusement."

"We must give one another lessons, then, Mr. Halbert," said Sam;—"but I can see already, that you have a much finer hand than I."

Soon after they got home, where the rest of the party were watching for them, wondering at their late absence.

Halbert was introduced to the Major by the Doctor, who said, "I deliver over to you a guest, a young conqueror from the Himalayas, and son of an old brother-warrior. If he now breaks his neck horse-riding, his death will not be at my door; I can now eat my dinner in peace."

After dinner the three young ones, Sam, Alice, and Jim, gathered round the fire, leaving Halbert with the Major and the Captain talking military, and the Doctor looking over an abstruse mathematical calculation, with which Captain Brentwood was not altogether satisfied. Alice and Sam sat in chairs side by side, like Christians, but Jim lay on the floor, between the two, like a black-fellow; they talked in a low voice about the stranger.

"I say," said Jim, "ain't he a handsome chap, and can't he ride? I dare say, he's a devil to fight too,—hear him tell how they pounded away at those Indians in that battle. I expect they'd have made a general of him before now, only he's too young. Dad says he's a very distinguished young officer. Alice, my dear, you should see the wound he's got, a great seam all down his side. I saw it when he was changing his shirt in my room before dinner."

"Poor fellow!" said Alice; "I like him very much. Don't you, Mr. Buckley?"

"I like him exceedingly;—I hope he'll stop with us," continued Jim.

"And I also," said Sam, "but what shall we do to-morrow?"

"Let's have a hunt," said Jim. "Halbert, have you ever been kangaroo hunting?"

"Never!—I want to go!"

"Well, we can have a capital hunt to-morrow: Sam has got his dog Fly here, and I'll take one of my best dogs, and we'll have a good run, I dare say."

"I shall come, too," said Alice: "that is," added she, looking shyly at Sam, "if you would be kind enough to take care of me, and let Mr. Halbert and Jim do the riding. But I'm afraid I shall be sadly in your way."

"If you don't go," said Sam, "I shall stay at home: now then!"

At this minute, the housekeeper came in bearing jugs and glasses. "Eleanor," said Jim, "is Jerry round?"

"Yes, sir; he's coiled somewhere in the woodhouse," said she.

"Just rouse him out and send him in."

"Who is this Jerry who coils in woodhouses?" said Halbert.

"A tame black belonging to us. He is great at all sorts of hunting; I want to see if he can find us a flying doe for to-morrow."

Jerry entered, and advanced with perfect self-possession towards the fire. He was a tall savage, with a big black beard, and wavy hair like a Cornishman. He was dressed in an old pair of dandy riding breeches of Jim's, which reached a short way below the knees, fitting closely, and a blue check shirt rolled up above the elbow

showing his lean wiry forearm, seamed and scarred with spear wounds and bruises. He addressed nobody, but kept his eyes wandering all over the room; at length he said, looking at the ceiling,—

“Cobbon thirsty this fellow: you got a drop of brandy?”

“Jerry,” said Jim, having produced the brandy, “you make a light kangaroo.”

“All about plenty kangaroo,” said Jerry.

“Yowi; * but mine want it big one flying doe.”

“Ah-h-h! Mine make a light flying doe along a stockyard this morning; close by, along a fent, you see!”

“That’ll do,” says Jim. “We’ll be up round the old stockyard after breakfast to-morrow. You, Jerry, come with us.”

It was a fresh breezy autumn morning in April, when the four sallied forth, about nine o’clock, for their hunt. The old stockyard stood in the bush, a hundred yards from the corner of the big paddock fence, and among low rolling ranges and gullies, thickly timbered with gum, cherry, and sheoak: a thousand parrots flew swiftly in flocks, whistling and screaming from tree to tree, while wattled-birds and numerous other honey-eaters clustered on the flowering basksias. The spur-winged plover and the curlew ran swiftly among the grass, and on a tall dead tree white cockatoos and blue cranes watched the intruders curiously.

* Yowi means yes. But Mr. Hamlyn is a little incorrect in using it here. It is more of a Moreton Bay word.—H. K.

Alice and Sam rode together soberly, and before them were Halbert and Jim, just up, ready for the chase. Before them, again, was the active blackfellow, holding the dogs in a leash,—two tall hounds, bred of foxhound and greyhound, with a dash of colley.

A mob of kangaroos crosses their path, but they are all small; so the dogs, though struggling fiercely, are still held tight by Jerry: now he crosses a little ridge before them and looks down into the gully beyond, holding up his hand.

The two young men gather up their reins and settle themselves in their seats. “Now, Halbert,” says Jim, “sit fast and mind the trees.”

They ride up to the blackfellow; through the low wattles, they can see what is in the gully before them, though the dogs cannot.

“Baal, flying doe this one,” says Jerry in a whisper. “Old man this fellow, cobbon matong,* mine think it.”

A great six-foot kangaroo was standing about two hundred yards from them, staring stupidly about him.

“Let go, Jerry,” said Jim. The dogs released; sprang forward, and, in an instant, saw their quarry, which, with a loud puff of alarm, bounded away up the opposite slope at full speed, taking twenty feet at each spring.

Halbert and Jim dashed off after the dogs, who had got a good start of them, and were laying themselves out to their work right gallantly; Sam’s dog, Fly,

* “Very strong.”

slightly leading. Both dogs were close on the game, and Halbert said,—

“We are going to have a short run, I’m afraid.”

“Talk about that twenty minutes hence,” said Jim, settling to his work.

Over range after range they hold their headlong course. Now a bandicoot scuttles away from under their feet to hide in his hollow log; now a mob of terrified cattle huddle together as they sweep by; now they are flying past a shepherd’s hut, and the mother runs out to snatch up a child, and bear him out of harm’s way, after they are safe past. A puppy, three weeks old, joins the chase with heart and soul, but “caves in” at about fifty yards, and sits him down to bark. Now they are rushing on through a broad flat, with another great range before them. Still always the grey bounding figure holds on, through sunlight and shadow, with the dogs grim and steadfast close in his wake.

The work begins to tell on the horses. Fat Jezebel, who could hardly be held at first, now is none the worse for a little spur; and Jim’s lean, long-legged horse, seems to consider that the entertainment ought to conclude shortly. “Well done, Fly!” he shouts; “bravely tried, my girl!” She had drawn herself ahead, and made a bold strike at the kangaroo, but missed him. Now the other dog, Bolt, tries it, but without luck; and now they have both dropped a little back, and seem in for another mile or so.

Well done, lass!—there she goes again! With a furious effort she pushes ahead, and seizes the flying beast by the hock—this time with some luck, for down he goes in a cloud of dust and broken sticks, and both the dogs are on him at once. Now he is up again and running, but feebly. And see, what is the matter with the young dog? He runs on, but keeps turning, snapping fiercely at his side, and his footsteps are marked with blood. Poor lad! he has got a bad wound in that last tumble,—the kangaroo has ripped up his flank with a kick from his hind foot. But now the chase is over,—the hunted beast has turned, and is at bay against a tree, Fly standing before him, waiting for assistance, snarling fiercely.

They pulled up. Jim took out a pistol and presented it to Halbert.

“Thank you,” said he. “Hair trigger?”

“Yes.”

He balanced it for a second, and in another the kangaroo was lying quivering on the ground, shot through the heart.

“Well done!” said Jim. “Now, I must look to this dog.”

All his flank along the ribs was laid open, and Jim, producing a needle and thread, proceeded to sew it up.

“Will you let me do that for you?” said Halbert.

“I wish you would. I’m fond of the poor thing, and

my hand shakes. You've seen the surgeons at work, I expect."

"Yes, indeed." And he tenderly and carefully stitched up the dog's side, while Jim held him.

"What do we do with the game?" said he.

"Oh, Jerry will be along on our tracks presently," said Jim. "He brings me the tail, and does what he likes with the rest. I wonder where Sam and Alice are?"

"Oh, they are right enough," said Halbert, laughing. "I dare say they are not very anxious about the kangaroo, or anything else. That's 'a case,' I suppose?"

"Well, I hope it is," said Jim; "but you see I don't know. Girls are so odd."

"Perhaps he has never asked her."

"No; I don't think he has. I wish he would. You are not married, are you?"

"My God — no!" said Halbert, "nor ever shall be."

"Never?"

"Never, Jim. Let me tell you a story as we ride home. You and I shall be good friends, I know. I like you already, though we have only known one another two days. I can see well what you are made of. They say it eases a man's mind to tell his grief. I wish it would mine. Well; before I left England I had secretly engaged myself to marry a beautiful girl,

very much like your sister, a governess in my brother-in-law's family. I went off to join my regiment, and left her there with my sister and her husband, Lord Carstone, who treated her as if she was already one of the family—God bless them! Two years ago my father died, and I came into twenty thousand pounds; not much, but enough to get married on in India, particularly as I was getting on in my profession. So I wrote to her to come out to me. She sailed in the *Assam*, for Calcutta, but the ship never arrived. She was spoken off the *Mauritius*, but never seen after. The underwriters have paid up her insurance, and everyone knows now that the *Assam* went down in a typhoon, with all hands."

"God bless you," said Jim! "I'm very sorry for that."

"Thank you. I have come here for change of scene more than anything, but I think I shall go back soon."

"I shall come with you," said Jim. "I have determined to be a soldier, and I know the governor has interest enough to get me into some regiment in India." (I don't believe he had ever thought of it before that morning.)

"If you are determined, he might. His services in India were too splendid to have been forgotten yet."

"I wonder," said Jim, "if he will let me go? I'd like to see Alice married first."

They jogged on in silence for a little, and slowly, on account of the wounded dogs. Then Jim said,—

"Well, and how did you like your sport?"

"Very much, indeed; but I thought bush-riding was harder work. We have only had one or two leaps over fallen logs altogether."

"There ain't much leaping, that's a fact. I suppose you have been fox-hunting?"

"My father was a master of hounds," replied Halbert. "On the first day of the season, when the hounds met at home, there would be two hundred horsemen on our terrace, fifty of them, at least, in pink. It was a regular holiday for all the country round. Such horses, too. My father's horse, the Elk, was worth £300, and there were better horses than him to be seen in the field, I promise you."

"And all after a poor little fox!"

"You don't know Charley I can see," said Halbert. "Poor little fox, indeed! Why, it's as fair a match between the best-ried pack of hounds in England, and an old dog-fox, as one would wish to see. And as hard work as it is to ride up to them, even without a stiff fence at every two hundred yards, to roll you over on your head, if your horse is blown or clumsy. Just consider how many are run, and how few are killed. I consider a fox to be the noblest quarry in the world. His speed, courage, and cunning are wonderful. I have seen a fox run fifteen miles as the crow flies, and only three of us in at the death. That's what I call sport."

“So do I, by Jove!” said Jim. “You have some good sport in India, too?”

“Yes. Pig-sticking is pretty—very pretty, I may say, if you have two or three of the right sort with you. All the Griffins ought to hunt together though. There was a young fellow, a King’s-officer, and a nobleman too, came out with us the other day, and rode well forward, but as the pig turned he contrived to spear my horse through the pastern. He was full of apologies, and I was outwardly highly polite and indifferent, but internally cursing him up hill and down dale. I went home and had the horse shot; but when I got up next morning, there was a Syce leading up and down a magnificent Australian, a far finer beast than the one which I had lost, which my Lord had sent up to replace my unfortunate nag. I went down to his quarters and refused to accept it; but he forced me in the end, and it gave me a good lesson about keeping my temper over an unavoidable accident, which I don’t mean to forget. Don’t you think it was prettily done?”

“Yes, I do,” said Jim; “but you see these noblemen are so rich that they can afford to do that sort of thing, where you or I couldn’t. But I expect they are very good fellows on the whole.”

“There are just as large a proportion of good noblemen as there are of any other class—more than that you have no right to expect. I’m a Liberal, as my father was before me, and a pretty strong one too; but I

think that a man with sixty thousand acres, and a seat in the House of Lords, is entitled to a certain sort of respect. A Grand Seigneur is a very capital institution if he will only stay on his estates some part of the year."

"Ay!" said Jim; who was a shrewd fellow in his way. "They know that here, well enough: look at our Macarthurs and Wentworths,—but then they must be men, and not snobs, as the governor says."

When they got home, they found Sam and Alice sitting in the verandah as comfortable as you please.

"Well," said Jim, "you are a nice lot! This is what you call kangaroo-hunting!"

"Oh, you went too fast for us. Have you killed?"

"Yes! out by the big swamp."

"You have taken your time to get home then."

"Poor Bolt is cut up, and we couldn't go out of a walk. Now give us something to eat, will you, Alice?"

"Well, ring the bell and we will have lunch."

But just as Jim rang the bell, there was a loud voice outside, and the three young men went out to see who it was, and found two horsemen in front of the door.

One, who was still sitting on his horse, was a dark-haired slight young man, Charles Hawker in fact, whom we know already, but the other, who had dismounted, and was leaning against his horse, was a highbred, delicate little fellow, to whom we have yet to be introduced.

He was a slight lad, perhaps not more than eighteen, with one of the pleasantest, handsomest faces of his

own that you could wish to see, and also a very intellectual look about him, which impressed you at once with the idea that if he lived he would have made some sort of figure in life. He was one of the greatest dandies, also, in those parts, and after the longest ride used to look as if he had been turned out of a bandbox. On the present occasion he had on two articles of dress which attracted Jim's attention amazingly. The first was a new white hat, which was a sufficiently remarkable thing in those parts at that time; and the second, a pair of yellow leather riding-trousers.

"Why, Cecil Mayford!" said Sam, "How do you do? Charley, how are you? Just in time for lunch. Come in."

Jim was walking round and round Cecil without speaking a word. At last the latter said, "How do *you* do, James Brentwood?"

"How do your breeches do, Cecil?" answered Jim; "that is a much more important question, By-the-by, let me introduce you to Mr. Halbert. Also, allow me to have the honour to inform you that my sister Alice is come home from school."

"I am aware of that, and am come over to pay my respects. Sam, leave me alone. If I were to disarrange my dress before I was presented to Miss Brentwood, I would put a period to my existence. Jim, my dear soul, come in and present me. Don't all you fellows come mobbing in, you know."

So Jim took Cecil in, and the other young fellows

l lounged about the door in the sun. Where have you come from, Charley?" asked Sam.

"I have been staying at the Mayfords'; and this morning, hearing that you and your father were here, we thought we would come over and stay a bit."

"By-the-bye," said Sam, "Ellen Mayford was to have come home from Sydney the same time as Alice Brentwood, or thereabouts. Pray, is she come?"

"Oh, yes!" said Charles; "she is come this fortnight, or more."

"What sort of a girl has she grown to be?"

"Well, *I* call her an uncommonly pretty girl. A very nice girl indeed, I should say. Have you heard the news from the north?"

"No!"

"Bushrangers! Nine or ten devils, loose on the upper Macquarie, caught the publican at Marryong alone in the bush; he had been an overlooker, or some such thing, in old times, so they stripped him, tied him up, gave him four dozen, and left him to the tender mercies of the blowflies, in consequence of which he was found dead next day, with the cords at his wrists cutting down to the bone with the struggles he made in his agony."

"Whew!" said Sam. "We are going to have some of the old-fashioned work over again. Let us hope Desborough will get hold of them before they come this way."

"Some of our fellow-countrymen," said Halbert, "are, it seems to me, more detestably ferocious than savages, when they once get loose."

"Much of a muchness—no better, and perhaps no worse," said Sam. "All men who act entirely without any law in their actions arrive at much the same degree, whether white or black."

"And will this Captain Desborough, whom you speak of, have much chance of catching these fellows?" asked Halbert.

"They will most likely disperse on his approach if he takes any force against them," said Sam. "I heard him say, myself, that the best way was to tempt them to stay and show fight, by taking a small force against them, as our admirals used to do to the French, in the war. By-the-bye, how is Tom Trounbridge? He is quite a stranger to me. I have only seen him twice since he was back from Port Phillip."

"He is off again now, after some rams, up to the north."

"I hope he won't fall in with the bushrangers. Anybody with him?"

"William Lee," answered Charles.

"A good escort. There is lunch going in,—come along."

CHAPTER XII.

SAM MEETS WITH A RIVAL, AND HOW HE TREATED HIM.

THAT week one of those runs upon the Captain's hospitality took place which are common enough in the bush, and, although causing a temporary inconvenience, are generally as much enjoyed by the entertainer as entertained. Everybody during this next week came to see them, and nobody went back again. So by the end of the week there were a dozen or fourteen guests assembled, all uninvited, and apparently bent on making a good long stay of it.

Alice, who had expected to be rather put out, conducted everything with such tact and dignity that Mrs. Buckley remarked to Mrs. Mayford, when they were alone together, "that she had never seen such beauty and such charming domestic grace combined, and that he would be a lucky young fellow who got her for a wife."

"Well, yes, I should be inclined to say so too," answered Mrs. Mayford. "Rather much of the boarding-school as yet, but that will wear off, I dare say. I don't think the young lady will go very long without an

offer. Pray, have you remarked anything, my dear madam?"

Yes, Mrs. Buckley had remarked something on her arrival the day before yesterday. She had remarked Sam and Alice come riding over the paddock, and Sam, by way of giving a riding-lesson, holding the little white hand in his, teaching it (the dog!) to hold the reins properly. And on seeing Alice she had said to herself, "That will do." But all this was not what Mrs. Mayford meant,—in fact, these two good ladies were at cross-purposes.

"Well, I thought I did," replied Mrs. Buckley, referring to Sam. "But one must not be premature. They are both very young, and may not know their own minds."

"They seem as if they did," said Mrs. Mayford. "Look there!" Outside the window they saw something which gave Mrs. Buckley a sort of pang, and made Mrs. Mayford laugh.)

There was no one in the garden visible but Cécil Mayford and Alice, and she was at that moment busily engaged in pinning a rose into his buttonhole. "The audacious girl!" thought Mrs. Buckley; "I am afraid she will be a daughter of debate among us. I wish she had not come home." While Mrs. Mayford continued,—

"I am far from saying, mind you, my dear Mrs. Buckley, that I don't consider Cecil might do far better

for himself. The girl is pretty, very pretty, and will have money. But she is too decided, my dear. Fancy a girl of her age expressing opinions! Why, if I had ventured to express opinions at her age, I—— I don't know what my father would have said."

"Depend very much on what sort of opinions they were; wouldn't it?" said Mrs. Buckley.

"No; I mean any opinions. Girls ought to have no opinions at all. There, last night when the young men were talking all together, she must needs get red in the face and bridle up, and say, 'She thought an Englishman who wasn't proud of Oliver Cromwell was unworthy of the name of an Englishman.' Her very words, I assure you. Why, if my daughter Ellen had dared to express herself in that way about a murderous Papist, I'd have slapped her face."

"I don't think Cromwell was a Papist; was he?" said Mrs. Buckley.

"A Dissenter, then, or something of that sort," said Mrs. Mayford. "But that don't alter the matter. What I don't like to see is a young girl thrusting her oar in in that way. However, I shall make no opposition, I can assure you. Cecil is old enough to choose for himself, and a mother's place is to submit. Oh, no; I assure you, whatever my opinions may be, I shall offer no opposition."

"I shouldn't think you would," said Mrs. Buckley, as the other left the room: "rather a piece of luck for your

boy to marry the handsomest and richest girl in the country. However, madam, if you think I am going to play a game of chess with you for that girl, or any other girl, why, you are mistaken."

And yet it was very provoking. Ever since she had begun to hear from various sources how handsome and clever Alice was, she had made up her mind that Sam should marry her, and now to be put out like this by people whom they had actually introduced into the house! It would be a great blow to Sam too. She wished he had never seen her. She would sooner have lost a limb than caused his honest heart one single pang. But, after all, it might be only a little flirtation between her and Cecil. Girls would flirt; but then there would be Mrs. Mayford manœuvring and scheming her heart out, while she, Agnes Buckley, was constrained by her principles only to look on and let things take their natural course.

Now, there arose a coolness between Agnes Buckley and the Mayfords, mother and son, which was never made up—never, oh, never! Not very many months after this she would have given ten thousand pounds to have been reconciled to the kind-hearted old busy-body; but then it was too late.

But now, going out into the garden, she found the Doctor busy planting some weeds he had found in the bush, in a quiet corner, with an air of stealth, intending to privately ask the gardener to see after them till he could

fetch them away. The magpie, having seen from the window a process of digging and burying going on, had attended in his official capacity, standing behind the Doctor, and encouraging him every now and then with a dance, or a few flute-like notes of music. I need hardly mention that the moment the Doctor's back was turned the bird rooted up every one of the plants, and buried them in some secret spot of his own, where they lie, I believe, till this day.

To the Doctor she told the whole matter, omitting nothing, and then asked his advice. "I suppose," she said, "you will only echo my own determination of doing nothing at all?"

"Quite so, my dear madam. If she loves Sam, she will marry him; if she don't, he is better without her."

"That is true," said Mrs. Buckley. "I hope she will have good taste enough to choose my boy."

"I hope so too, I am sure," said the Doctor. "But we must not be very furious if she don't. Little Cecil Mayford is both handsomer and cleverer than Sam. We must not forget that, you know."

That evening was the first thoroughly unhappy evening, I think, that Sam ever passed in his life. I am inclined to imagine that his digestion was out of order. If any of my readers ever find themselves in the same state of mind that he was in that night, let them be comforted by considering that there is

always a remedy at hand, before which evil thoughts and evil tempers of all kinds fly like mist before the morning sun. How many serious family quarrels, marriages out of spite, alterations of wills, and secessions to the Church of Rome, might have been prevented by a gentle dose of blue pill! What awful instances of chronic dyspepsia are presented to our view by the immortal bard in the characters of Hamlet and Othello! I look with awe on the digestion of such a man as the present King of Naples. Banish dyspepsia and spirituous liquors from society, and you would have no crime, or at least so little that you would not consider it worth mentioning.

However, to return to Sam. He, Halbert, Charles Hawker, and Jim had been away riding down an emu, and had stayed out all day. But Cecil Mayford, having made excuse to stay at home, had been making himself in many ways agreeable to Alice, and at last had attended her on a ride, and on his return had been rewarded with a rose, as we saw. The first thing Sam caught sight of when he came home was Alice and Cecil walking up and down the garden very comfortably together, talking and laughing. He did not like to see this. He dreaded Cecil's powers of entertainment too much, and it made him angry to hear how he was making Alice laugh. Then, when the four came into the house, this offending couple took no notice of them at all, but continued walking up

and down in the garden, till Jim, who, not being in love, didn't care twopence whether his sister came in or not, went out to the verandah, and called out "Hi!"

"What now?" said Alice, turning round.

"Why, we're come home," said Jim, "and I want you."

"Then you won't get me, impudence," said Alice, and began walking up and down again. But not long after, having to come in, she just said, "How do, Mr. Halbert?" and passed on, never speaking to Sam. Now there was no reason why she should have spoken to him, but "Good evening, Mr. Buckley," would not have hurt anybody. And now in came Cecil, with that unlucky rose, and Jim immediately began,—

"Hallo, Cis, where did you get your flower?"

"Ah, that's a secret," said Cecil, with an affected look.

"No secret at all," said Alice, coming back. "I gave it to him. He had the civility to stay and take me out for a ride, instead of going to run down those poor pretty emus. And that is his reward. I pinned it into his coat for him." And out she went again.

Sam was very sulky, but he couldn't exactly say with whom. With himself more than anybody, I believe.

"Like Cecil's consummate impudence!" was his first thought; but after he had gone to his room to dress,

his better nature came to him, and before dinner came on he was his old self again, unhappy still, but not sulky, and determined to be just.

“What right have I to be angry, even suppose she does come to care more for him than for me? What can be more likely? He is more courtly, amusing, better-looking, they say, and certainly cleverer; oh, decidedly cleverer. He might as well make me his enemy as I make him mine. No; dash it all! He has been like a brother to me ever since he was so high, and I’ll be d——d if there shan’t be fair play between us two, though I should go into the army through it. But I’ll watch, and see how things go.”

So he watched at dinner and afterwards, but saw little to comfort him. Saw one thing, nay, two things, most clearly. One was, that Cecil Mayford was madly in love with Alice; and the other was, that poor Cecil was madly jealous of Sam. He treated him differently to what he had ever done before, as though on that evening he had first found his rival. Nay, he became almost rude, so that once Jim looked suddenly up, casting his shrewd blue eyes first on one and then on the other, as though to ask what the matter was. But Sam only said to himself, “Let him go on. Let him say what he will. He is beside himself now, and some day he will be sorry. He shall have fair play, come what will.”

But it was hard for our lad to keep his temper sometimes. It was hard to see another man sitting alongside of her all the evening, paying her all those nameless little attentions which somehow, however unreasonably, he had brought himself to think were his right, and no one else's, to pay. Hard to wonder and wonder whether or no he had angered her, and if so, how? Halbert, good heart! saw it all, and sitting all the evening by Sam, made himself so agreeable, that for a time even Alice herself was forgotten. But then, when he looked up, and saw Cecil still beside her, and her laughing and talking so pleasantly, while he was miserable and unhappy, the old chill came on his heart again, and he thought—was the last happy week only a deceitful gleam of sunshine, and should he ever take his old place beside her again?

Once or twice more during the evening Cecil was almost insolent to him, but still his resolution was strong.

“If he is a fool, why should I be a fool? I will wait and see if he can win her. If he does, why, there is India for me. If he does not, I will try again. Only I will not quarrel with Cecil, because he is blinded. Little Cecil, who used to bathe with me, and ride pickaback round the garden! No; he shall have fair play. By Jove, he shall have fair play, if I die for it.”

And he had some little comfort in the evening. When they had all risen to go to bed, and were

standing about in confusion lighting candles, he suddenly found Alice by his side, who said in a sweet, low, musical tone,—

“ Can you forgive me ? ”

“ What have I to forgive, my dear young lady ? ” he said softly. “ I was thinking of asking your forgiveness for some unknown fault.”

“ I have behaved so ill to you to-day,” she said, “ the first of my new friends ! I was angry at your going out after our poor emus, and I was cross to you when you came home. Do let us be friends again.”

There was a chance for a reconciliation ! But here was Cecil Mayford thrusting between them with a lit candle just at the wrong moment ; and she gave him such a sweet smile, and such kind thanks, that Sam felt nearly as miserable as ever.

And next morning everything went wrong again. Whether it was merely coquetry, or whether she was angry at their hunting the emus, or whether she for a time preferred Cecil’s company, I know not ; but she, during the next week, neglected Sam altogether, and refused to sit beside him, making a most tiresome show of being unable to get on without Cecil Mayford, who squired her here, there, and everywhere, in the most provoking fashion.

But it so happened that the Doctor and the Major sat up later than the others that night, taking a glass of

punch together before the fire, and the Major said, abruptly,—

“There will be mischief among the young fellows about that girl. It is a long while since I saw one man look at another as young Mayford did at our Sam to-night. I wish she were out of the way. Sam and Mayford are both desperately in love with her, and one must go to the wall. I wish that boy of mine was keener; he stayed aloof from her all to-night.”

“Don’t you see his intention?” said the Doctor. “I am very much mistaken if I do not. He is determined to leave the field clear for all comers, unless she herself makes some sort of advances to him. ‘If she prefers Mayford,’ says Sam to himself, ‘in the way she appears to, why, she is welcome to him, and I can go home as soon as I am assured of it.’ And go home he would, too, and never say one word of complaint to any living soul.”

“What a clear, brave, honest soul that lad has!” said the Major.

“Truly,” said the Doctor, “I only know one man who is his equal.”

“And who is he?”

“His father. Good night; good dreams!”

* * * * *

So Sam kept to his resolution of finding out whether or no Alice was likely to prefer Cecil to him. And, for all his watching and puzzling, he couldn’t. He had

never confided one word of all this to his mother, and yet she knew it all as well as he.

Meanwhile, Cecil was quite changed. He almost hated Sam, and seldom spoke to him, and at the same time hated himself for it. He grew pale, too, and never could be persuaded to join any sport whatever; while Sam, being content to receive only a few words in the day from My Lady, worked harder than ever, both in the yards and riding. All day he and Jim would be working like horses, with Halbert for their constant companion, and, half an hour before dinner, would run whooping down to the river for their bathe, and then come in clean, happy, hungry—so full of life and youth, that in these sad days of deficient grinders, indigestion, and liver, I can hardly realize that once I myself was as full of blood and as active and hearty as any of them.

There was much to do the week that Alice and Sam had their little tiff. The Captain was getting in the "scrubbers" cattle, which had been left, under the not very careful rule of the Donovans, to run wild in the mountains. These beasts had now to be got in, and put through such processes as cattle are born to undergo. The Captain and the Major were both fully stiff for working in the yards, but their places were well supplied by Sam and Jim. The two fathers, with the assistance of the stockman, and sometimes of the sons, used to get them into the yards, and then the two young

men would go to work in a style I have never seen surpassed by any two of the same age. Halbert would sometimes go into the yard and assist, or rather hinder; but he had to give up just when he was beginning to be of some use, as the exertion was too violent for an old wound he had.

Meanwhile Cecil despised all these things, and, though a capital hand among cattle, was now grown completely effeminate, hanging about the house all day, making, in fact, "rather a fool of himself about that girl," as Halbert thought, and thought, besides, "What a confounded fool she will make of herself if she takes that little dandy!—not that he isn't a very gentlemanlike little fellow, but that Sam is worth five hundred of him."

One day, it so happened that every one was out but Cecil and Alice; and Alice, who had been listening to the noises at the stockyard a long while, suddenly proposed to go there.

"I have never been," she said; "I should so like to go! I know I am not allowed, but you need not betray me, and I am sure the others won't. I should so like to see what they are about!"

"I assure you, Miss Brentwood, that it is not a fit place for a lady."

"Why not?"

Cecil blushed scarlet. If women only knew what awkward questions they ask sometimes! In this instance he made an ass of himself, for he hesitated and stammered.

"Come along!" said she; "you are going to say that it is dangerous—(nothing was further from his thoughts); I must learn to face a little danger, you know. Come along."

"I am afraid," said Cecil, "that Jim will be very angry with me;" which was undoubtedly very likely.

"Never mind Jim," she said; "come along."

So they went, and in the rush and confusion of the beasts' feet got to the yard unnoticed. Sam and Jim were inside, and Halbert was perched upon the rails; she came close behind him and peeped through.

She was frightened. Close before her was Sam, hatless, in shirt and breeches only, almost unrecognisable, grimed with sweat, dust, and filth beyond description. He had been nearly horned that morning, and his shirt was torn from his armpit downwards, showing rather more of a lean muscular flank than would have been desirable in a drawing-room. He stood there with his legs wide apart, and a stick about eight feet long and as thick as one's wrist in his hand; while before him, crowded into a corner of the yard, were a mob of infuriated, terrified cattle. As she watched, one tried to push past him and get out of the yard; he stepped aside and let it go. The next instant a lordly young bull tried the same game, but he was "wanted;" so, just as he came nearly abreast of Sam, he received a frightful blow on the nose from the stick, which turned him.

But only for a moment. The maddened beast

shaking his head with a roar rushed upon Sam like a thunderbolt, driving him towards the side of the yard. He stepped on one side rapidly, and then tumbled himself bodily through the rails, and fell with his fine brown curls in the dust, right at the feet of poor Alice, who would have screamed, but could not find the voice.

Jim and Halbert roared with laughter, and Sam, picking himself up, was beginning to join as loud as anybody, when he saw Alice looking very white and pale, and went towards her.

"I hope you haven't been frightened by that evil-disposed bull, Miss Brentwood," he said pleasantly; "you must get used to that sort of work."

"Hallo, sister!" shouted Jim; "what the deuce brings you here? I thought you were at home at your worsted work. You should have seen what we were at, Cecil, before you brought her up. Now, miss, just mount that rail alongside of Halbert, and keep quiet."

"Oh, do let me go home, Jim dear; I am so frightened!"

"Then you must learn not to be frightened," he said. "Jump up now!"

But meanwhile the bull had the best of it, and had got out of the yard. A long lithe lad, stationed outside on horseback, was in full chase, and Jim, leaping on one of the horses tied to the rails, started off to his assistance. The two chased the unhappy bull as a pair of grey-

hounds chase a hare, with their whips cracking as rapidly and as loudly as you would fire a revolver. After an excursion of about a mile into the forest, the beast was turned and brought towards the yard. Twice he turned and charged the lad, with the same success. The cunning old stockhorse wheeled round or sprang aside, and the bull went blundering into empty space with two fourteen-foot stock-whips playing on his unlucky hide like rain. At length he was brought in again, and one by one those entitled to freedom were passed out by Sam, and others reserved unto a day of wrath—all but one cow with her calf.

All this time Alice had sat by Halbert. Cecil had given no assistance, for Jim would have done anything rather than press a guest into the service. Halbert asked her, what she thought of the sport?

"Oh, it is horrible," she said. "I should like to go home. I hope it is all over."

"Nearly," said Halbert; "that cow and calf have got to go out. Don't get frightened now; watch your brother and Buckley."

It was a sight worth watching; Sam and Jim advanced towards the maddened beasts to try and get the cow to bolt. The cattle were huddled up at the other end of the yard, and, having been so long in hand, were getting dangerous. Once or twice young beasts had tried to pass, but had been driven back by the young men, with a courage and dexterity which

the boldest matador in Spain could not have surpassed. Cecil Mayford saw, with his well-accustomed eye, that matters were getting perilous, and placed himself at the rails, holding one ready to slip if the beasts should break. In a moment, how or why none could tell, they made a sudden rush : Jim was borne back, dealing blows about him like a Paladin, and Sam was down, rolled over and over in the dust, just at Alice's feet.

Half-a-dozen passed right over him as he lay. Jim had made good his retreat from the yard, and Cecil had quietly done just the right thing : put up the rail he held, and saved the day's work. The cattle were still safe, but Sam lay there in the dust, motionless.

Before any of them had appreciated what had happened, Alice was down, and, seizing Sam by the shoulders, had dragged him to the fence. Halbert, horrified to see her actually in the presence of the cattle, leaped after her, put Sam through the rails, and lifted her up to her old post on the top. In another instant the beasts swept furiously round the yard, just over the place where they had been standing.

They gathered round Sam, and for an instant thought he was dead ; but just as Jim hurriedly knelt down, and raising his head began to untie his handkerchief, Sam uprose, and, shaking himself and dusting his clothes, said,—

“ If it had been any other beast which knocked me down but that poley heifer, I should have been

hurt ;” and then said that “it was bathing-time, and they must look sharp to be in time for dinner :” three undeniable facts, showing that, although he was a little unsteady on his legs, his intellect had in nowise suffered.

And Halbert, glancing at Alice, saw something in her face that made him laugh ; and, dressing for dinner in Jim’s room, he said to that young gentleman,—

“ Unless there are family reasons against it, Jim, which of course I can’t speak about, you know, I should say that you would have Sam for your brother-in-law in a very short time.”

“ Do you really think so, now ?” said Jim ; “ I rather fancied she had taken up with Cecil. I like Sam’s fist, mind you, better than Cecil’s whole body, though he is a good little fellow, too.”

“ She has been doing that, I think, rather to put Sam on his mettle ; for I think he was taking things too easy with her at first ; but now, if Cecil has any false hopes, he may give them up ; the sooner the better. No woman who was fancy free could stand seeing that noble head of Sam’s come rolling down in the dust at her feet ; and what courage and skill he exhibited, too ! Talk of bull-fights ! I have seen one. Bah ! it is like this nail-brush to a gold watch, to what I saw to-day. Sam, sir, has won a wife by cattle-drafting.”

“ If that is the case,” said Jim, pensively brushing

his hair, "I am very glad that Cecil's care for his fine clothes prevented his coming into the yard; for he is one of the bravest, coolest hands among cattle, I know; he beats me."

"Then he beats a precious good fellow, Jim. A man who could make such play as you did to-day, with a stick, ought to have nothing but a big three-foot of blue steel in his hand, and Her Majesty's commission to use it against her enemies."

"That will come," said Jim, "the day after Sam has got the right to look after Alice; not before; the governor is too fond of his logarithms."

When Sam came to dress for dinner he found that he was bruised all over, and had to go to the Captain for "shin plaster," as he called it.

Captain Brentwood had lately been trying homeopathy, which in his case, there being nothing the matter with him, was a decided success. He doctored Sam with Arnica externally, and gave him the five-hundredth of a grain of something to swallow; but what made Sam forget his bruises quicker than these dangerous and violent remedies, was the delightful change in Alice's behaviour. She was so agreeable that evening, that he was in the seventh heaven; the only drawback to his happiness being poor Cecil Mayford's utter distraction and misery. Next morning, too, after a swim in the river, he handled such a singularly good knife and fork, that Halbert told Jim privately,

that if he, Sam, continued to sport such a confoundedly good appetite, he would have to be carried half-a-mile on a heifer's horns and left for dead, to keep up the romantic effect of his tumble the day before.

They were sitting at breakfast, when the door opened, and there appeared before the assembled company the lithe lad I spoke of yesterday, who said,—

“ Beg your pardon, sir ; child lost, sir.”

They all started up. “ Whose child ? ” asked the Captain.

“ James Grewer's child, sir, at the wattle hut.”

“ Oh ! ” said Alice, turning to Sam, “ it is that pretty little boy up the river that we were admiring so last week.”

“ When was he lost ? ” asked Major Buckley.

“ Two days now, sir,” said the lad.

“ But the hut is on the plain side of the river,” said the Major ; “ he can't be lost on the plains.”

“ The river is very low, sir,” said the lad ; “ hardly ankle deep just there. He may have crossed.”

“ The black fellows may have found him,” suggested Mrs. Buckley.

“ They would have been here before now to tell us, if they had, I am afraid,” said Captain Brentwood. “ Let us hope they may have got him ; however, we had better start at once. Two of us may search the river between this and the hut, and two may follow it towards the Mayfords'. Sam, you have the

best horse ; go down to the hut, and see if you can find any trace across the river, on this side, and follow it up to the ranges. Take some one with you, and, by-the-bye, take your dog Rover."

They were all quickly on the alert. Sam was going to ask Jim to come with him ; but as he was putting the saddle on Widderin he felt a hand on his arm, and, turning, saw Cecil Mayford.

" Sam Buckley," said Cecil, " let me ride with you ; will you ? "

" Who sooner, old friend ? " answered Sam heartily : " let us come together by all means, and if we are to go to the ranges, we had better take a blanket a-piece, and a wedge of damper. So if you will get them from the house, I will saddle your horse . "

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE CHILD WAS LOST, AND HOW HE GOT FOUND AGAIN—WHAT CECIL SAID TO SAM WHEN THEY FOUND HIM—AND HOW IN CASTING LOTS, ALTHOUGH CECIL WON THE LOT, HE LOST THE PRIZE.

FOUR or five miles up the river from Garoopna stood a solitary hut, snug, sheltered by a lofty bare knoll, round which the great river chafed among the boulders. Across the stream was the forest, sloping down in pleasant glades from the mountain; and behind the hut rose the plain four or five hundred feet over head, seeming to be held aloft by the blue-stone columns which rose from the river side.

In this cottage resided a shepherd, his wife, and one little boy, their son, about eight years old. A strange, wild little bush child, able to speak articulately, but utterly without knowledge or experience of human creatures, save of his father and mother; unable to read a line; without religion of any sort or kind; as entire a little savage, in fact, as you could find in the worst den in your city, morally speaking, and yet

beautiful to look on ; as active as a roe, and, with regard to natural objects, as fearless as a lion.

As yet unfit to begin labour. All the long summer he would wander about the river bank, up and down the beautiful rock-walled paradise where he was confined, sometimes looking eagerly across the water at the waving forest boughs, and fancying he could see other children far up the vistas beckoning to him to cross and play in that merry land of shifting lights and shadows.

It grew quite into a passion with the poor little man to get across and play there ; and one day when his mother was shifting the hurdles, and he was handing her the strips of green hide which bound them together, he said to her,—

“ Mother, what country is that across the river ? ”

“ The forest, child.”

“ There’s plenty of quantongs over there, eh, mother, and raspberries ? Why mayn’t I get across and play there ? ”

“ The river is too deep, child, and the Bunyip lives in the water under the stones.”

“ Who are the children that play across there ? ”

“ Black children, likely.”

“ No white children ? ”

“ Pixies ; don’t go near ’em child ; they’ll lure you on, Lord knows where. Don’t get trying to cross the river, now, or you’ll be drowned.”

But next day the passion was stronger on him than ever. Quite early on the glorious cloudless midsummer day he was down by the river side, sitting on a rock, with his shoes and stockings off, paddling his feet in the clear tepid water, and watching the million fish in the shallows—black fish and grayling—leaping and flashing in the sun.

There is no pleasure that I have ever experienced like a child's midsummer holiday. The time, I mean, when two or three of us used to go away up the brook, and take our dinners with us, and come home at night tired, dirty, happy, scratched beyond recognition, with a great nosegay, three little trout, and one shoe, the other one having been used for a boat till it had gone down with all hands out of soundings. How poor our Derby days, our Greenwich dinners, our evening parties, where there are plenty of nice girls, are after that! Depend on it, a man never experiences such pleasure or grief after fourteen as he does before, unless in some cases in his first love-making, when the sensation is new to him.

But, meanwhile, there sits our child, barelegged, watching the forbidden ground beyond the river. A fresh breeze was moving the trees, and making the whole a dazzling mass of shifting light and shadow. He sat so still that a glorious violet and red king-fisher perched quite close, and, dashing into the water, came forth with a fish, and fled like a ray of light along the

winding of the river. A colony of little shell parrots, too, crowded on a bough, and twittered and ran to and fro quite busily, as though they said to him, "We don't mind you, my dear; you are quite one of us."

Never was the river so low. He stepped in; it scarcely reached his ancle. Now surely he might get across. He stripped himself, and, carrying his clothes, waded through, the water never reaching his middle all across the long, yellow, gravelly shallow. And there he stood naked and free in the forbidden ground.

He quickly dressed himself, and began examining his new kingdom, rich beyond his utmost hopes. Such quantongs, such raspberries, surpassing imagination; and when tired of them such fern boughs, six or eight feet long! He would penetrate this region, and see how far it extended.

What tales he would have for his father to-night. He would bring him here, and show him all the wonders, and perhaps he would build a new hut over here, and come and live in it? Perhaps the pretty young lady, with the feathers in her hat, lived somewhere here, too?

There! There is one of those children he had seen before across the river. Ah! ah! it was not a child at all, but a pretty grey beast, with big ears. A kangaroo, my lad; he won't play with you, but skips away slowly, and leaves you alone.

There is something like the gleam of water on that rock. A snake ! Now a sounding rush through the wood, and a passing shadow. An eagle ! He brushes so close to the child ; that he strikes at the bird with a stick, and then watches him as he shoots up like a rocket, and, measuring the fields of air in ever-widening circles, hangs like a motionless speck upon the sky ; though, measure his wings across, and you will find he is nearer fifteen feet than fourteen.

Here is a prize, though ! A wee little native bear, barely eight inches long,—a little grey beast, comical beyond expression, with broad flapped ears, sits on a tree within reach. He makes no resistance, but cuddles into the child's bosom, and eats a leaf as they go along ; while his mother sits aloft, and grunts indignant at the abstraction of her offspring, but, on the whole, takes it pretty comfortably, and goes on with her dinner of peppermint leaves.

What a short day it has been ! Here is the sun getting low, and the magpies and jackasses beginning to tune up before roosting.

He would turn and go back to the river. Alas ! which way ?

He was lost in the bush. He turned back and went, as he thought, the way he had come, but soon arrived at a tall, precipitous cliff, which, by some infernal magic, seemed to have got between him and the river. Then he broke down, and that strange madness came

on him which comes even on strong men when lost in the forest: a despair, a confusion of intellect, which cost many a bold man his life. Think what it must be with a child.

He was fully persuaded that the cliff was between him and home, and that he must climb it. Alas! every step he took aloft carried him further from the river and the hope of safety; and when he came to the top, just at dark, he saw nothing but cliff after cliff, range after range, all around him. He had been wandering through steep gullies all day unconsciously, and had penetrated far into the mountains. Night was coming down, still and crystal-clear, and the poor little lad was far away from help or hope, going his last long journey alone.

Partly perhaps walking, and partly sitting down and weeping, he got through the night; and when the solemn morning came up again he was still tottering along the leading range, bewildered; crying, from time to time, "Mother, mother!" still nursing his little bear, his only companion, to his bosom, and holding still in his hand a few poor flowers he had gathered the day before. Up and on all day, and at evening, passing out of the great zone of timber, he came on the bald, thunder-smitten summit ridge, where one ruined tree held up its skeleton arms against the sunset, and the wind came keen and frosty. So, with failing, feeble legs, upward still, towards the region of the granite and the snow; towards the eyrie of the kite and the eagle.

* * * * *

Brisk as they all were at Garoopna, none were so brisk as Cecil and Sam. Charles Hawker wanted to come with them, but Sam asked him to go with Jim; and, long before the others were ready, our two had strapped their blankets to their saddles, and, followed by Sam's dog Rover, now getting a little grey about the nose, cantered off up the river.

Neither spoke at first. They knew what a solemn task they had before them; and, while acting as though everything depended on speed, guessed well that their search was only for a little corpse, which, if they had luck, they would find stiff and cold under some tree or crag.

Cecil began: "Sam, depend on it that child has crossed the river to this side. If he had been on the plains he would have been seen from a distance in a few hours."

"I quite agree," said Sam. "Let us go down this side till we are opposite the hut, and search for marks by the river side."

So they agreed; and in half an hour were opposite the hut, and, riding across to it to ask a few questions, found the poor mother sitting on the door-step, with her apron over her head, rocking herself to and fro.

"We have come to help you, mistress," said Sam. "How do you think he is gone?"

She said, with frequent bursts of grief, that "some.

days before he had mentioned having seen white children across the water, who beckoned him to cross and play; that she, knowing well that they were fairies, or perhaps worse, had warned him solemnly not to mind them; but that she had very little doubt that they had helped him over and carried him away to the forest; and that her husband would not believe in his having crossed the river."

"Why, it is not knee-deep across the shallow," said Cecil.

"Let us cross again," said Sam: "he *may* be drowned, but I don't think it."

In a quarter of an hour from starting they found, slightly up the stream, one of the child's socks, which in his hurry to dress he had forgotten. Here brave Rover took up the trail like a bloodhound, and before evening stopped at the foot of a lofty cliff.

"Can he have gone up here?" said Sam, as they were brought up by the rock.

"Most likely," said Cecil. "Lost children always climb from height to height. I have heard it often remarked by old bush hands. Why they do so, God, who leads them, only knows; but the fact is beyond denial.* Ask Rover what he thinks?"

* The Author of this book knew a child who, being lost by his father out shooting on one of the flats bordering the Eastern Pyrenees, in Port Phillip, on a Sunday afternoon, was found on the Wednesday following, dead, at an elevation above the Avoca township of between two and three thousand feet.

The brave old dog was half-way up, looking back for them. It took them nearly till dark to get their horses up; and, as there was no moon, and the way was getting perilous, they determined to camp, and start again in the morning.

They spread their blankets and lay down side by side. Sam had thought, from Cecil's proposing to come with him in preference to the others, that he would speak of a subject nearly concerning them both; but Cecil went off to sleep and made no sign; and Sam, ere he dozed, said to himself, "By Jove, if he don't speak this journey, I will. It is unbearable that we should not come to some understanding. Poor Cecil!"

At early dawn they caught up their horses, which had been hobbled with the stirrup leathers, and started afresh. Both were more silent than ever, and the dog, with his nose to the ground, led them slowly along the rocky rib of the mountain, ever going higher and higher.

"It is inconceivable," said Sam, "that the poor child can have come up here. There is Tuckerimbid close to our right, five thousand feet above the river. Don't you think we must be mistaken?"

"The dog disagrees with you," said Cecil. "He has something before him not very far off. Watch him."

The trees had become dwarfed and scattered; they were getting out of the region of trees; the real forest zone was now below them, and they saw they were

emerging towards a bald elevated down, and that a few hundred yards before them was a dead tree, on the highest branch of which sat an eagle.

"The dog has stopped," said Cecil, "the end is near."

"See," said Sam, "there is a handkerchief under the tree."

"That is the boy himself," said Cecil.

They were up to him and off in a moment. There he lay, dead and stiff, one hand still grasping the flowers he had gathered on his last happy play-day, and the other^a laid as a pillow, between the soft cold cheek and the rough cold stone. His midsummer holiday was over, his long journey was ended. He had found out at last what lay beyond the shining river he had watched so long.

Both the young men knelt beside him for a moment in silence. They had found only what they had expected to find, and yet, now that they had found it, they were far more touched and softened than they could have thought possible. They stayed in silence a few moments, and then Cecil, lifting up his head, said suddenly,—

"Sam Buckley! there can be no debate between us two, with this lying here between us. Let us speak now."

"There has never been any debate, Cecil," said he, "and there never would be, though this little corpse was buried fathoms deep. It takes two to make a quarrel, Cecil, and I will not be one."

"Sam," said Cecil, "I love Alice Brentwood better than all the world besides."

"I know it."

"And you love her too, as well, were it possible, as I do."

"I know that too."

"Why," resumed Cecil hurriedly, "has this come to pass? Why has it been my unlucky destiny, that the man I love and honour above all others should become my rival? Are there no other women in the world? Tell me, Sam, why is it forced on me to choose between my best friend and the woman I love dearer than life? Why has this terrible emergency come between us?"

"I will tell you why," said Sam, speaking very quietly, as though fearing to awaken the dead: "to teach us to behave like men of honour and gentlemen, though our hearts break. That is why, Cecil."

"What shall we do?" said Cecil.

"Easily answered," said Sam. "Let her decide for herself. It may be, mind you, that she will have neither of us. There has been one living in the house with her lately, far superior in every point to you or I. How if she thought fit to prefer him?"

"Halbert!"

"Yes, Halbert! What more likely? Let you and I find out the truth, Cecil, like men, and abide by it. Let each one ask her in his turn what chance he has."

"Who first?"

"See here," said Sam; "draw one of these pieces of

grass out of my hand. If you draw the longest piece ask her at once. Will you abide by this?"

He said "yes," and drew—the longest piece.

"That is well," said Sam. "And now no more of this at present. I will sling this poor little fellow in my blanket and carry him home to his mother. See, Cecil, what is Rover at?"

Rover was on his hind legs against the tree, smelling at something. When they came to look, there was a wee little grey bear perched in the hollow of the tree.

"What a very strange place for a young bear!" said Cecil.

"Depend on it," said Sam, "that the child had caught it from its dam, and brought it up here. Take it home with you, Cecil, and give it to Alice."

Cecil took the little thing home, and in time it grew to be between three and four feet high, a grandfather of bears. The magpie protested against his introduction to the establishment, and used to pluck billfulls of hair from his stomach under pretence of lining a nest, which was never made. But in spite of this, the good gentle beast lived nigh as long as the magpie—long enough to be caressed by the waxen fingers of little children, who would afterwards gather round their father, and hear how the bear had been carried to the mountains in the bosom of the little boy who lost his way on the granite ranges, and went to heaven, in the year that the bushrangers came down.

Sam carried the little corpse back in his blanket, and that evening helped the father to bury it by the river side. Under some fern trees they buried him, on a knoll which looked across the river, into the treacherous beautiful forest which had lured him to his destruction.

Alice was very sad for a day or two, and thought and talked much about this sad accident, but soon she recovered her spirits again. And it fell out, that a bare week after this, the party being all out in one direction or another, that Cecil saw Alice alone in the garden, tending her flowers, and knew that the time was come for him to keep his bargain with Sam and speak to her. He felt like a man who was being led to execution ; but screwed his courage to the highest point, and went down to where she was tying up a rose-tree.

"Miss Brentwood," he said, "I am come to petition for a flower."

"You shall have a dozen, if you will," she answered. "Help yourself; will you have a peony or a sunflower? If you have not made up your mind, let me recommend a good large yellow sunflower."

Here was a pretty beginning!

"Miss Brentwood, don't laugh at me, but listen to me a moment. I love you above all earthly things besides. I worship the ground you walk on. I loved you from the first moment I saw you. I shall love you as well, ay, better, if that could be, on the day my heart is

still, and my hand is cold for ever: can you tell me to hope? Don't drive me, by one hasty half-considered word, to despair and misery for the rest of my life. Say only one syllable of encouragement, and I will bide your time for years and years."

Alice was shocked and stunned. She saw he was in earnest, by his looks, and by his hurried, confused way of speaking. She feared she might have been to blame, and have encouraged him in her thoughtlessness, more than she ought. "I will make him angry with me," she said to herself. "I will treat him to ridicule. It is the only chance, poor fellow!"

"Mr. Mayford," she said, "if I thought you were in jest, I should feel it necessary to tell my father and brother that you had been impertinent. I can only believe that you are in earnest, and I deeply regret that your personal vanity should have urged you to take such an unwarrantable liberty with a girl you have not yet known for ten days."

He turned and left her without a word, and she remained standing where she was, half inclined to cry, and wondering if she had acted right on the spur of the moment—sometimes half inclined to believe that she had been unladylike and rude. When a thing of this kind takes place, both parties generally put themselves in immediate correspondence with a confidant. Miss Smith totters into the apartments of her dearest friend, and falls weeping on the sofa, while Jones rushes

madly into Brown's rooms in the Temple, and, shying his best hat into the coalscuttle, announces that there is nothing now left for him but to drown the past in debauchery. Whereupon Brown, if he is a good fellow, as all the Browns are, produces the whisky and hears all about it.

So in the present instance two people were informed of what had taken place before they went to bed that night; and those two were Jim and Doctor Mulhaus. Alice had stood where Cecil had left her, thinking, could she confide it to Mrs. Buckley, and ask for advice. But Mrs. Buckley had been a little cross to her that week for some reason, and so she was afraid; and, not knowing anybody else well enough, began to cry.

There was a noise of horses' feet just beyond the fence, and a voice calling to her to come. It was Jim, and, drying her eyes, she went out, and he, dismounting, put his arm round her waist and kissed her.

"Why, my beauty," he said, "who has been making you cry?"

She put her head on his shoulder and began sobbing louder than ever. "Cecil Mayford," she said in a whisper.

"Well, and what the d——l has he been at?" said Jim, in a rather startling tone.

"Wants to marry me," she answered, in a whisper, and hid her face in his coat.

"The deuce doubt he does," said Jim; "who does not? What did you tell him?"

"I told him that I wondered at his audacity."

"Sent him off with a flea in his ear, in fact," said Jim. "Well, quite right. I suppose you would do the same for any man?"

"Certainly I should," she said, looking up.

"If Doctor Mulhaus, now,—eh?"

"I'd box his ears, Jim," she said, laughing; "I would, indeed."

"Or Sam Buckley; would you box his ears, if he were to—you know?"

"Yes," she said. But there spread over her face a sudden crimson blush, like the rosy arch which heralds the tropical sun,* which made Jim laugh aloud.

"If you dared to say a word, Jim," she said, "I would never, never——"

Poor Cecil had taken his horse and had meant to ride home, but came back again at night, "just," he thought, "to have one more look at her before he entered on some line of life which would take him far away from Garoopna and its temptations."

The Doctor (who has been rather thrust aside lately in the midst of all this love-making and so on) saw that something had gone very wrong with Cecil, who

* A horrible plagiarism, Mr. Hamlyn—

"Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek
Flushed like the coming of the day."—H. K.

was a great friend of his, and, as he could never bear to see a man in distress without helping him, he encouraged Cecil to stroll down the garden with him, and then kindly and gently asked him what was wrong.

Cecil told him all, from beginning to end, and added that life was over for him, as far as all pleasure and excitement went; and, in short, said what we have all said, and had said to us in our time, after a great disappointment in love; which the Doctor took for exactly what it was worth, although poor little Cecil's distress was very keen; and, remembering some old bygone day when he had suffered so himself, he cast about to find some comfort for him.

"You will get over this, my boy," said he, "if you would only believe it."

"Never, never!" said Cecil.

"Let me tell you a story, as we walk up and down. If it does not comfort you, it will amuse you. How sweet the orange bloom smells! Listen:—Had not the war broke out so suddenly, I should have been married, two months to a day, before the battle of Saarbruck. Catherine was a distant cousin, beautiful and talented, about ten years my junior. Before Heaven, sir, on the word of a gentleman, I never persecuted her with my addresses, and if either of them say I did, tell them from me, sir, that they lie, and I will prove it on their bodies. Bah! I was forgetting.

I, as head of the family, was her guardian, and, although my younger brother was nearer her age, I courted her, in all honour and humility proposed to her, and was accepted with even more willingness than most women condescend to show on such occasions, and received the hearty congratulations of my brother. Few women were ever loved better than I loved Catherine. Conceive, Cecil, that I loved her as well as you love Miss Brentwood, and listen to what follows.

“The war-cloud burst so suddenly that, leaving my bride that was to be, to the care of my brother, and putting him in charge over my property, I hurried off to join the Landsturm, two regiments of which I had put into a state of efficiency by my sole exertions.

“You know partly what followed,—in one day an army of 150,000 men destroyed, the King in flight to Königsberg, and Prussia a province of France.

“I fled, wounded badly, desperate and penniless, from that field. I learnt from the peasants, that what I had thought to be merely a serious defeat was an irretrievable disaster; and, in spite of wounds, hunger, and want of clothes, I held on my way towards home.

“The enemy were in possession of the country, so I had to travel by night alone, and beg from such poor cottages as I dared to approach. Sometimes got a night's rest, but generally lay abroad in the fields. But at length, after every sort of danger and

hardship, I stood above the broad, sweeping Maine, and saw the towers of my own beloved castle across the river, perched as of old above the vineyards, looking protectingly down upon the little town which was clustered on the river-bank below, and which owned me for its master.

“ I crossed at dusk. I had to act with great caution, for I did not know whether the French were there or no. I did not make myself known to the peasant who ferried me over, further than as one from the war, which my appearance was sufficient to prove. I landed just below a long high wall which separated the town from the river, and, ere I had time to decide what I should do first, a figure coming out of an archway caught me by the hand, and I recognised my own major domo, my foster-brother.

“ ‘ I knew you would come back to me,’ he said, ‘ if it was only as a pale ghost; though I never believed you dead, and have watched here for you night and day to stop you.’

“ ‘ Are the French in my castle, then?’

“ ‘ There are worse than the French there,’ he said; ‘ worse than the devil Bonaparte himself. Treason, treachery, adultery!’

“ ‘ Who has proved false?’ I cried.

“ ‘ Your brother! False to his king, to his word, to yourself. He was in correspondence with the French for six months past, and, now that he believes you

dead, he is living in sin with her who was to have been your wife.'

"I did not cry out or faint, or anything of that sort. I only said, 'I am going to the castle, Fritz,' and he came with me. My brother had turned him out of the house when he usurped my property, but by a still faithful domestic we were admitted, and I, knowing every secret passage in my house, came shoeless from behind some arras, and stood before them as they sat at supper. I was a ghastly sight. I had not shaved for a fortnight, and my uniform hung in tatters from my body; round my head was the same bloody white handkerchief with which I had bound up my head at Jena. I was deadly pale from hunger, too; and from my entering so silently they believed they had seen a ghost. My brother rose, and stood pale and horrified, and Catherine fell fainting on the floor. This was all my revenge, and ere my brother could speak, I was gone—away to England, where I had money in the funds, accompanied by my faithful Max, whom Mary Hawker's father buried in Drumston churchyard.

"So in one day I lost a brother, a mistress, a castle, a king, and a fatherland. I was a ruined, desperate man. And yet I lived to see old Blucher with his dirty boots on the silken sofas at the Tuileries, and to become as stout and merry a middle-aged man as any Prussian subject in her young Majesty's dominions."

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW TOM TROUBRIDGE KEPT WATCH FOR THE FIRST TIME.

HUMAN affairs are subject to such an infinite variety of changes and complications, that any attempt to lay down particular rules for individual action, under peculiar circumstances, must prove a failure. Hence I consider proverbs, generally speaking, to be a failure, only used by weak-minded men, who have no opinion of their own. Thus, if you have a chance of selling your station at fifteen shillings, and buying in, close to a new gold-field on the same terms, where fat sheep are going to the butcher at from eighteen shillings to a pound, butter, eggs, and garden produce at famine prices, some dolt unsettles you, and renders you uncertain and miserable by saying that "rolling stone gathers no moss;" as if you wanted moss! Again, having worked harder than the Colonial Secretary all the week, and wishing to lie in bed till eleven o'clock on Sunday, a man comes into your room at half-past seven, on a hot morning, when your only chance is to sleep out an hour or so of the heat, and informs you that the "early bird gets the worms." I had a partner, who bought in after Jim

Stockbridge was killed, who was always flying this early bird, when he couldn't sleep for mosquitoes. I have got rid of him now; but for the two years he was with me, the dearest wish of my heart was that my tame magpie Joshua could have had a quiet two minutes with that early bird before any one was up to separate them. I rather fancy he would have been spoken of as "the late early bird" after that. In short, I consider proverbs as the refuge of weak minds.

The infinite sagacity of the above remarks cannot be questioned; their application may. I will proceed to give it. I have written down the above tirade nearly, as far as I can guess, a printed pageful (may be a little more, looking at it again), in order to call down the wrath of all wise men, if any such have done me the honour of getting so far in these volumes, on the most trashy and false proverb of the whole: "Coming events cast their shadows before."

Now, they don't, you know. They never did, and never will. I myself used to be a strong believer in pre- (what's the word?—prevarications, predestinations)—no—presentiments; until I found by experience that, although I was always having presentiments, nothing ever came of them. Sometimes somebody would walk over my grave, and give me a creeping in the back, which, as far as I can find out, proceeded from not having my braces properly buttoned behind. Sometimes I

have heard the death-watch, produced by a small spider (may the deuce confound him!), not to mention many other presentiments and depressions of spirit, which I am now firmly persuaded proceed from indigestion. I am far from denying the possibility of a coincidence in point of time between a fit of indigestion and a domestic misfortune. I am far from denying the possibility of more remarkable coincidences than that. I have read in books, novels by the very best French authors, how a man, not heard of for twenty years, having, in point of fact, been absent during that time in the interior of Africa, may appear at Paris at a given moment, only in time to save a young lady from dishonour, and rescue a property of ten million francs. But these great writers of fiction don't give us any warning whatever. The door is thrown heavily open, and he stalks up to the table where the will is lying, quite unexpectedly; stalks up always, or else strides. (How would it be, my dear Monsieur Dumas, if, in your next novel, he were to walk in, or run in, or hop in, or, say, come in on all-fours like a dog?—anything for a change, you know.) And these masters of fiction are right—"Coming events do not cast their shadows before."

If they did, how could it happen that Mary Hawker sat there in her verandah at Toonarbin singing so pleasantly over her work? And why did her handsome, kindly face light up with such a radiant smile when she saw her son Charles come riding along under the

shadow of the great trees only two days after Cecil Mayford had proposed to Alice, and had been refused?

He came out of the forest shadow with the westering sunlight upon his face, riding slowly. She, as she looked, was proud to see what a fine seat he had on his horse, and how healthy and handsome he looked.

He rode round to the back of the house, and she went through to meet him. There was a square court behind, round which the house, huts, and store formed a quadrangle, neat and bright, with white quartz gravel. By-the-bye, there was a prospecting party who sank two or three shafts in the flat before the house last year; and I saw about eighteen pennyweights of gold which they took out. But it did not pay, and is abandoned. (This in passing, *à propos* of the quartz.)

"Is Tom Troubridge come home, mother?" said he, as he leaned out of the saddle to kiss her.

"Not yet, my boy," she said. "I am all alone. I should have had a dull week, but I knew you were enjoying yourself with your old friend at Garoopna. A great party there, I believe?"

"I am glad to get home, mother," he said. "We were very jolly at first, but latterly Sam Buckley and Cecil Mayford have been looking at one another like cat and dog. Stay, though; let me be just; the fierce looks were all on Cecil Mayford's side."

"What was the matter?"

"Alice Brentwood was the matter, I rather suspect,"

he said, getting off his horse. "Hold him for me, mother, while I take the saddle off."

She did as requested. "And so they two are at loggerheads, eh, about Miss Brentwood? Of course. And what sort of a girl is she?"

"Oh, very pretty; deuced pretty, in fact. But there is one there takes my fancy better."

"Who is she?"

"Ellen Mayford; the sweetest little mouse—— Dash it all; look at this horse's back. That comes of that infernal flash military groom of Jim's putting on the saddle without rubbing his back down. Where is the bluestone?"

She went in and got it for him as naturally as if it was her place to obey, and his to command. She always waited on him, as a matter of course, save when Tom Troubridge was with them, who was apt to rap out something awkward about Charles being a lazy young hound, and about his waiting on himself, whenever he saw Mary yielding to that sort of thing.

"I wonder when Tom will be back?" resumed Charles.

"I have been expecting him this last week; he may come any night. I hope he will not meet any of those horrid bushrangers."

"Hope not either," said Charles; "they would have to go a hundred or two of miles out of their way to make it likely. Driving rams is slow work; they may not be here for a week."

"A nice price he has paid!"

"It will pay in the end, in the quality of the wool," said Charles.

They sat in silence. A little after, Charles had turned his horse out, when at once, without preparation, he said to her,—

"Mother, how long is it since my father died?"

She was very much startled. He had scarcely ever alluded to his father before; but she made shift to answer him quietly.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen!" he said.

"Then he has been dead eighteen years. He died just as you were born. Never mention him, lad. He was a bad man, and by God's mercy you are delivered from him." •

She rose and went into the house quite cheerfully. Why should she not? Why should not a handsome, still young, wealthy widow be cheerful? For she was a widow. For years after settling at Toonarbin, she had contrived, once in two or three years, to hear some news of her husband. After about ten years, she heard that he had been reconvicted, and sentenced to the chain-gang for life; and lastly, that he was dead. About his being sentenced for life, there was no doubt, for she had a piece of newspaper which told of his crime,—and a frightful piece of villany it was,—and after that, the report of his death was so probable that no one for an

instant doubted its truth. Men did not live long in the chain-gang, in Van Diemen's Land, in those days, brother. Men would knock out one another's brains in order to get hung, and escape it. Men would cry aloud to the judge to hang them out of the way! It was the most terrible punishment known, for it was hopeless. Penal servitude for life, as it is now, gives the very faintest idea of what it used to be in old times. With a little trouble I could tell you the weight of iron carried by each man. I cannot exactly remember, but it would strike you as being incredible. They were chained two and two together (a horrible association), to lessen the chances of escape; there was no chance of mitigation for good conduct; there was hard mechanical, uninteresting work, out of doors in an inclement climate, in all weathers: what wonder if men died off like rotten sheep? And what wonder, too, if sometimes the slightest accident,—such as a blow from an overseer, returned by a prisoner, produced a sudden rising, unpreconcerted, objectless, the result of which were half a dozen murdered men, as many lunatic women, and five or six stations lighting up the hill-side, night after night, while the whole available force of the colony was unable to stop the ruin for months?

But to the point. Mary was a widow. When she heard of her husband's death, she had said to herself, "Thank God!" But when she had gone to her room, and was sat a-thinking, she seemed to have had another

husband before she was bound up with that desperate, coining, forging George Hawker—another husband bearing the same name; but surely that handsome curly-headed young fellow, who used to wait for her so patiently in the orchard at Drumston, was not the same George Hawker as this desperate convict? She was glad the convict was dead and out of the way; there was no doubt of that; but she could still find a corner in her heart to be sorry for her poor old lover,—her handsome old lover,—ah me!

But that even was passed now, and George Hawker was as one who had never lived. Now on this evening we speak of, his memory came back just an instant, as she heard the boy speak of the father, but it was gone again directly. She called her servants, and was telling them to bring supper, when Charles looked suddenly in, and said,—“Here they are!”

There they were, sure enough, putting the rams into the sheep-yard. Tom Troubridge, as upright, brave-looking a man as ever, and, thanks to bush-work, none the fatter. William Lee, one of our oldest acquaintances, was getting a little grizzled, but otherwise looked as broad and as strong as ever.

They rode into the yard, and Lee took the horses.

“Well, cousin,” said Tom; “I am glad to see you again.”

“You are welcome home, Tom; you have made good speed.”

Tom and Charles went into the house, and Mary was about following them, when Lee said, in so low a tone, that it did not reach the others,—“Mrs. Hawker!”

She turned round and looked at him, she had welcomed him kindly when he came into the yard with Tom, and yet he stood still on horseback, holding Tom’s horse by the bridle. A stern, square-looking figure he was; and when she looked at his face, she was much troubled, at—she knew not what.

“Mrs. Hawker,” he said, “can you give me the favour of ten minutes’ conversation, alone this evening?”

“Surely, William, now!”

“Not now,—my story is pretty long, and, what is more, ma’am, somebody may be listening, and what I have got to tell you must be told in no ear but your own.”

“You frighten me, Lee! You frighten me to death.”

“Don’t get frightened, Mrs. Hawker. Remember if anything comes about, that you have good friends about you; and, that I, William Lee, am not the worst of them.”

Lee went off with the horses, and Mary returned to the house. What mystery had this man to tell her, “that no one might hear but she”?—very strange and alarming! Was he drunk?—no, he was evidently quite sober; as she looked out once more, she could see him at the stable, cool and self-possessed, ordering the

lads about: something very strange and terrifying to one who had such a dark blot in her life.

But she went in, and as she came near the parlour, she heard Charles and Tom roaring with laughter. As she opened the door she heard Tom saying: "And, by Jove, I sat there like a great snipe, face to face with him, as cool and unconcerned as you like. I took him for a flash overseer, sporting his salary, and I was as thick as you like with him. And 'Matey,' says I, (you see I was familiar, he seemed such a jolly sort of bird), 'Matey, what station are you on?' 'Maraganoa,' says he. 'So,' says I, 'you're rather young there, ain't you? I was by there a fortnight ago.' He saw he'd made a wrong move, and made it worse. 'I mean,' says he, 'Maraganoa on the Clarence side.' 'Ah!' says I, 'in the Cedar country?' 'Precisely,' says he. And there we sat drinking together, and I had no more notion of its being him than you would have had."

She sat still listening to him, eating nothing. Lee's words outside had, she knew not why, struck a chill into her heart, and as she listened to Tom's story, although she could make nothing of it, she felt as though getting colder and colder. She shivered, although the night was hot. Through the open window she could hear all those thousand commingled indistinguishable sounds that make the night-life of the bush, with painful distinctness. She arose and went to the window.

The night was dark and profoundly still. The stars

were overhead, though faintly seen through a haze; and beyond the narrow enclosures in front of the house, the great forest arose like a black wall. Tom and Charles went on talking inside, and yet, though their voices were loud, she was hardly conscious of hearing them, but found herself watching the high dark wood and listening to the sound of the frogs in the creek, and the rustle of a million crawling things, heard only in the deep stillness of night.

Deep in the forest somewhere, a bough cracked, and fell crashing, then all was silent again. Soon arose a wind, a partial wandering wind, which came slowly up, and, rousing the quivering leaves to life for a moment, passed away; then again a silence, deeper than ever, so that she could hear the cattle and horses feeding in the lower paddock, a quarter of a mile off; then a low wail in the wood, then two or three wild weird yells, as of a devil in torment, and a pretty white curlew skirled over the housetop to settle on the sheep-wash dam.

The stillness was awful; it boded a storm, for behind the forest blazed up a sheet of lightning, showing the shape of each fantastic elevated bough. Then she turned round to the light, and said,—

“My dear partner, I had a headache, and went to the window. What was the story you were telling Charles, just now? Who was the man you met in the public-house, who seems to have frightened you so?”

"No less a man than Captain Touan, my dear cousin!" said Tom, leaning back with the air of a man who has made a point, and would be glad to hear "what you have to say to that, sir."

"Touan?" repeated Mary. "Why, that's the great bushranger, that is out to the north; is it not?"

"The same man, cousin! And there I sat hob and nob with him for half an hour in the 'Lake George' public-house. If Desborough had come in, he'd have hung me for being found in bad company. Ha! ha! ha!"

"My dear partner," she said, "what a terrible escape! Suppose he had risen on you?"

"Why I'd have broken his back, cousin," said Tom, unless my right hand had forgot her cunning. He is a fine man of his weight: but, Lord, in a struggle for life and death, I could break his neck, and have one more claim on Heaven for doing so; for he is the most damnable villain that ever disgraced God's earth, and that is the truth. That man, cousin, in one of his devil's raids, tore a baby from its mother's breast by the leg, dashed its brains out against a tree, and then—I daren't tell a woman what happened." *

* Tom was confusing Touan with Michael Howe. The latter actually did commit this frightful atrocity; but I never heard that the former actually combined the two crimes in this way. We must remember that barely four years from this present time (1858) a crime, exceeding this in atrocity, was committed in Van Diemen's Land, in open day. I refer to the murder of a lad returning from school.

"Tom! Tom!" said Mary, "how can you talk of such things?"

"To show you what we have to expect if he comes this way, cousin; that is all."

"And is there any possibility of such a thing?" asked Mary.

"Why not? Why should he not pay us the compliment of looking round this way?"

"Why do they call him Touan, Tom?" asked Charles.

"Can't, you see," said Tom, "the Touan, the little grey flying squirrel, only begins to fly about at night, and slides down from his bough sudden and sharp. This fellow has made some of his most terrible raids at night, and so he got the name of Touan."

"God deliver us from such monsters!" said Mary, and left the room.

She went into the kitchen. Lee sat there smoking. When she came in he rose, and, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, touched his forehead and stood looking at her.

"Now then, old friend," she said, "come here."

He followed her out. She led the way swiftly, through the silent night, across the yard, over a small paddock, up to the sheep-yard beside the woolshed. There she turned shortly round, and, leaning on the fence, said abruptly—

"No one can hear us here, William Lee. Now, what have you to say?"

He seemed to hesitate a moment, and then began :
“ Mrs. Hawker, have I been a good servant to you ? ”

“ Honest, faithful, kindly, active ; who could have been a better servant than you, William Lee ! A friend, and not a servant ; God is my witness ; now then ? ”

“ I am glad to hear you say so,” he answered. “ I did you a terrible injury once ; I have often been sorry for it since I knew you, but it cannot be mended now.”

“ Since you knew me ? ” she said. “ Why, you have known me ever since I have been in the country, and you have never injured me since then, surely.”

“ Ay, but at home,” he said. “ In England. In Devonshire.”

“ My God ! ”

“ I was your husband’s companion in all his earlier villanies. I suggested them to him, and egged him on. And now, mind you, after twenty years, my punishment is coming.”

She could only say still, “ My God ! ” while her throat was as dry as a kiln.

“ Listen to what I have got to tell you now. Hear it all in order, and try to bear up, and use your common sense and courage. As I said before, you have good friends around you, and you at least are innocent.”

“ Guilty ! guilty ! ” she cried. “ Guilty of my father’s death ! Read me this horrible riddle, Lee.”

“ Wait and listen,” said Lee, unable to forego, even in her terror, the great pleasure that all his class have

of spinning a yarn, and using as many words as possible. "See here. We came by Lake George, you know, and heard everywhere accounts of a great gang of bushrangers being out. So we didn't feel exactly comfortable, you see. We came by a bush public-house, and Mr. Troubridge stops, and says he, 'Well, lad, suppose we yard these rams an hour, and take drink in the parlour?' 'All right,' I says, with a wink, 'but the tap for me, if you please. That's my place, and I'd like to see if I can get any news of the whereabouts of the lads as are sticking up all round, because, if they're one way, I'd as lief be another.' 'All right,' says he. So in I goes, and sits down. There was nobody there but one man, drunk under the bench. And I has two noblers of brandy, and one of Old Tom; no, two Old Toms it was, and a brandy; when in comes an old chap as I knew for a lag in a minute. Well, he and I cottoned together, and found out that we had been prisoners together five-and-twenty years ago. And so I shouted for him, and he for me, and at last I says, 'Butty,' says I, 'who are these chaps round here on the lay' (meaning, Who are the bushrangers)? And he says, 'Young 'uns—no one as we know.' And I says, 'Not likely, matey; I've been on the square this twenty year.' 'Same here,' says the old chap; 'give us your flipper. And now,' says he, 'what sort of a cove is your boss' (meaning Mr. Troubridge)? 'One of the *real right sort*,' says I. 'Then see here,' says he, 'I'll tell you

something: the head man of that there gang is at this minute a-sitting yarning with your boss in the parlour.' 'The devil!' says I. 'Is so,' says he, 'and no flies.' So I sings out, 'Mr. Troubridge, those sheep will be out;' and out he came running, and I whispers to him, 'Mind the man you're sitting with, and leave me to pay the score.' So he goes back, and presently he sings out, 'Will, have you got any money?' And I says, 'Yes, thirty shillings.' 'Then,' says he, 'pay for this, and come along.' And thinks I, I'll go in and have a look at this great new captain of bushrangers; so I goes to the parlour door, and now who do you think I saw?"

"I know," she said. "It was that horrible villain they call Touan."

"The same man," he answered. "Do you know who he is?"

She found somehow breath to say, "How can I? How is it possible?"

"I will tell you," said Lee. "There, sitting in front of Mr. Troubridge, hardly altered in all these long years, sat George Hawker, formerly of Drumston,—your husband!"

She gave a low cry, and beat the hard rail with her head till it bled. Then, turning fiercely round, she said, in a voice hoarse and strangely altered,—

"Have you anything more to tell me, you croaking raven?"

He had something more to tell, but he dared not

speak now. So he said, "Nothing at present, but if laying down my life——"

She did not wait to hear him, but, with her hands clasped above her head, she turned and walked swiftly towards the house. She could not cry, or sob, or rave; she could only say, "Let it fall on me, O God, on me!" over and over again.

Also, she was far too crushed and stunned to think precisely what it was she dreaded so. It seemed afterwards, as Frank Maberly told me, that she had an indefinable horror of Charles meeting his father, and of their coming to know one another. She half feared that her husband would appear and carry away her son with him, and even if he did not, the lad was reckless enough as it was, without being known and pointed at through the country as the son of Hawker the bushranger.

These were after-thoughts, however; at present she leaned giddily against the house-side, trying, in the wild hurrying night-rack of her thoughts, to distinguish some tiny star of hope, or even some glimmer of reason. Impossible! Nothing but swift, confused clouds everywhere, driving wildly on,—whither?

But a desire came upon her to see her boy again, and compare his face to his father's. So she slid quietly into the room where Tom and Charles were still talking together of Tom's adventure, and sat looking at the boy, pretending to work. As she came in, he was laughing loudly at something, and his face was alive

and merry. "He is not like what his father was at his age," she said.

But they continued their conversation. "And now, what sort of man was he, Tom?" said Charles. "Was he like any one you ever saw?"

"Why, no. Stay, let's see. Do you know, he was something like you in the face."

"Thank you!" said Charles, laughing. "Wait till I get a chance of paying you a compliment, old fellow. A powerful fellow—eh?"

"Why, yes,—a tough-looking subject," said Tom.

"I shouldn't have much chance with him, I suppose?"

"No; he'd be too powerful for you, Charley."

A change came over his face, a dark, fierce look. Mary could see the likeness *now* plain enough, and even Tom looked at him for an instant with a puzzled look.

"Nevertheless," continued Charles, "I would have a turn with him if I met him; I'd try what six inches of cold steel between ——"

"Forbear, boy! Would you have the roof fall in and crush you dead?" said Mary, in a voice that appalled both of them. "Stop such foolish talk, and pray that we may be delivered from the very sight of these men, and suffered to get away to our graves in peace, without any more of these horrors and surprises. I would sooner," she said, increasing in rapidity as she went on, "I would far sooner, live like some one I have heard of, with a sword above his head, than thus. If he comes and looks on me, I shall die."

She had risen and stood in the firelight, deadly pale. Somehow one of the bands of her long black hair had fallen down, and half covered her face. She looked so unearthly that, coupling her appearance with the wild, senseless words she had been uttering, Tom had a horrible suspicion that she was gone mad.

"Cousin," he said, "let me beseech you to go to bed. Charles, run for Mrs. Barker. Mary," he added, as soon as he was gone, "come away, or you'll be saying something before that boy you'll be sorry for. You're hysterical; that's what is the matter with you. I am afraid we have frightened you by our talk about bush-rangers."

"Yes, that is it! that is it!" she said; and then, suddenly, "Oh! my dear old friend, you will not desert me?"

"Never, Mary; but why ask such a question now?"

"Ask Lee," she said, and the next moment Mrs. Barker, the housekeeper, came bustling in with smelling salts, and so on, to minister to a mind diseased. And Mary was taken off to bed.

"What on earth can be the matter with her, cousin Tom?" said Charles when she was gone.

"She is out of sorts, and got hysterical; that's what it is," said Tom.

"What odd things she said!"

"Women do when they are hysterical. It's nothing more than that."

But Mrs. Barker came in with a different opinion. She

said that Mary was very hot and restless, and had very little doubt that a fever was coming on. "Terribly shaken she had been," said Mrs. Barker, "hoped nothing was wrong."

"There's something decidedly wrong, if your mistress is going to have a fever," said Tom. "Charley, do you think Doctor Mulhaus is at Baroona or Garoopna?"

"Up at the Major's," said Charles, "Shall I ride over for him? There will be a good moon in an hour."

"Yes," said Tom, and fetch him over at once. Tell him we think it's a fever, and he will know what to bring. Ride like h—l, Charley."

As soon as he was alone, he began thinking. "What the *doose* is the matter?" was his first exclamation, and, after half-an-hour's cogitation, only had arrived at the same point, "What the *doose* is the matter?" Then it flashed across him, what did she mean by "ask Lee?" Had she any meaning in it, or was it nonsense? There was an easy solution for it; namely, to ask Lee. And so arising he went across the yard to the kitchen.

Lee was bending low over the fire, smoking. "William," said Tom, "I want to see you in the parlour."

"I was thinking of coming across myself," said Lee; "In fact I should have come when I had finished my pipe."

"Bring your pipe across, then," said Tom. "Girl, take in some hot water and tumblers."

"Now, Lee," said Tom, as soon as Lee had gone

through the ceremony of "Well, here's my respex, sir," "Now Lee, you have heard how ill the mistress is."

"I have indeed, sir," said he; "and very sorry I am, as I am partly the cause of it."

"All that simplifies matters, Will, considerably," said Tom. "I must tell you that when I asked her what put her in that state, she said, 'ask Lee.'"

"Shows her sense, sir. What she means is, that you ought to hear what she and I have heard; and I mean to tell you more than I have her. If she knew everything, I am afraid it would kill her."

"Ay! I know nothing as yet, you know."

Lee in the first place put him in possession of what we already know—the fact of Hawker's reappearance, and his identity with "The Touan;" then he paused.

"This is very astonishing, and very terrible, Lee," said he. "Is there anything further?"

"Yes, the worst. That man has followed us home!"

Tom had exhausted all his expressions of astonishment and dismay before this; so now he could only give a long whistle, and say, "Followed us home?"

"Followed us home!" said Lee. "As we were passing the black swamp, not two miles from here, this very morning, I saw that man riding parallel with us through the bush."

"Why did not you tell me before?"

"Because I had not made up my mind how to act. First I resolved to tell the mistress; that I did. Then

after I had smoked a pipe, I resolved to tell you, and that I did, and now here we are, you see."

That was undeniable. There they were, with about as pretty a complication of mischief to unravel as two men could wish to have. Tom felt so foolish and non-plussed, that he felt inclined to laugh at Lee when he said, "Here we are." It so exactly expressed the state of the case; as if he had said, "All so and so has happened, and a deuce of a job it is, and here sit you and I, to deliberate what's to be done with regard to so and so."

He did not laugh, however; he bit his lip, and stopped it. Then he rose, and, leaning his great shoulders against the mantelpiece, stood before the fireless grate, and looked at Lee. Lee also looked at him, and I think that each one thought what a splendid specimen of his style the other was. If they did not think so, "they ought to it," as the Londoners say. But neither spoke a few minutes; then Tom said,—

"Lee, Will Lee, though you came to me a free man, and have served me twenty years, or thereabouts, as free man, I don't conceal from myself the fact that you have been convict. Pish, man! don't let us mince matters now,—a lag."

Lee looked him full in the face, without changing countenance, and nodded.

"Convicted more than once, too," continued Tom.

"Three times," said Lee.

“Ah!” said Tom. “And if a piece of work was set before me to do, which required pluck, honesty, courage, and cunning, and one were to say to me, ‘Who will you have to help you?’ I would answer out boldly, ‘Give me Will Lee the lag; my old friend, who has served me so true and hearty these twenty years.’”

“And you’d do right, sir,” said Lee quietly. And rising up, he stood beside Tom, with one foot on the fender, bending down and looking into the empty grate.

“Now, Will,” said Tom, turning round and laying his hand on his shoulder, “this fellow has followed us home, having found out who we were. Why has he done so?”

“Evident,” said Lee, “to work on the fears of the mistress, and get some money from her.”

“Good!” said Tom. “Well answered. We shall get to the bottom of our difficulty like this. Only answer the next question as well, and I will call you a Poly—, Poly—; d—n the Greek.”

“Not such a bad name as that, I hope, sir,” said Lee smiling. “Who might she have been? A bad un, I expect. You don’t happen to refer to Hobart-town Polly, did you, sir?”

“Hold your tongue, you villain,” said Tom, “or you’ll make me laugh; and these are not laughing times.”

“Well, what is your question, sir?” asked Lee.

“Why, simply this: What are we to do?”

"I'll tell you," said Lee, speaking in an animated whisper. "Watch, watch, and watch again, till you catch him. Tie him tight, and hand him over to Captain Desborough. He may be about the place to-night: he will be sure to be. Let us watch to-night, you and I, and for many nights, till we catch him."

"But," whispered Tom, "he will be hung."

"He has earned it," said Lee. "Let him be hung."

"But he is her husband," urged Tom, in a whisper. "He is that boy's father. I cannot do it. Can't we buy him off?"

"Yes," answered Lee in the same tone, "till his money is gone. Then you will have a chance of doing it again, and again, all your life."

"This is a terrible dilemma," said Tom; and added in a perplexity almost comical, "Drat the girl! Why didn't she marry poor old Jim Stockbridge, or sleepy Hamlyn, or even your humble servant? Though, in all honour, I must confess that I never asked her, as those two others did. No! I'll tell you what, Lee: we will watch for him, and catch him if we can. After that we will think what is to be done. By-the-bye, I have been going to ask you:—do you think he recognised you at the public-house there?"

"That puzzles me," said Lee. "He looked me in the face, but I could not see that he did. I wonder if he recognised you?"

"I never saw him in my life before," said Tom. "It is

very likely that he knew me, though. I was champion of Devon and Cornwall, you know, before little Abraham Cann kicked my legs from under me that unlucky Easter Monday. (The deuce curl his hair for doing it!) I never forgave him till I heard of that fine bit of play with Polkinghorn. Yes! he must have known me."

Lee lit the fire, while Tom, blowing out the candles, drew the curtains, so that any one outside could not see into the room. Nevertheless, he left the French window open, and then went outside, and secured all the dogs in the dog-house.

The night was wonderfully still and dark. As he paused before entering the house, he could hear the bark falling from the trees a quarter of a mile off, and the opossums scratching and snapping little twigs as they passed from bough to bough. Somewhere, apparently at an immense distance, a morepork was chanting his monotonous cry. The frogs in the creek were silent even, so hot was the night. "A good night for watching," said he to Lee when he came in. "Lie you down; I'll take the first watch."

They blew out the candle, and Lee was in the act of lying down, when he arrested himself, and held up his finger to Tom.

They both listened, motionless and in silence, until they could hear the spiders creeping on the ceiling. There it was again! A stealthy step on the gravel.

Troubridge and Lee crouched down breathless. One minute, two, five, but it did not come again. At length they both moved, as if by concert, and Lee said, " 'Possum."

"Not a bit," said Troubridge; and then Lee lay down again, and slept in the light of the flickering fire. One giant arm was thrown around his head, and the other hung down in careless grace; the great chest was heaved up, and the head thrown back; the seamed and rugged features seemed more stern and marked than ever in the chiaroscuro; and the whole man was a picture of reckless strength such as one seldom sees. Tom had dozed and had awoke again, and now sat thinking, "What a terrible tough customer that fellow would be!" when suddenly he crouched on the floor, and, reaching out his hand, touched Lee, who woke, and silently rolled over with his face towards the window.

There was no mistake this time—that was no opossum. There came the stealthy step again; and now, as they lay silent, the glass-door was pushed gently open, showing the landscape beyond. The gibbous moon was just rising over the forest, all blurred with streaky clouds, and between them and her light they could see the figure of a man, standing inside the room.

Tom could wait no longer. He started up, and fell headlong with a crash over a little table that stood in his way. They both dashed into the garden, but only in time to hear flying footsteps, and immediately after

the gallop of a horse, the echoes of which soon died away, and all was still.

"Missed him, by George!" said Lee. "It was a precious close thing, though. What could he mean by coming into the house,—eh?"

"Just as I expected; trying to get an interview with the mistress. He will be more cautious in future, I take it."

"I wonder if he will try again?"

"Don't know," said Troubridge; "he might: not to-night, however."

They went in and lay down again, and Troubridge was soon asleep; and very soon that sleep was disturbed by dreadful dreams. At one time he thought he was riding madly through the bush for his bare life; spurring on a tired horse, which was failing every moment more and more. But always through the tree-stems on his right he saw glancing, a ghost on a white horse, which kept pace with him, do what he would. Now he was among the precipices on the ranges. On his left, a lofty inaccessible cliff; on the right, a frightful blue abyss; while the slaty soil kept sliding from beneath his horse's feet. Behind him, unseen, came a phantom, always gaining on him, and driving him along the giddiest wallaby tracks. If he could only turn and face it, he might conquer, but he dare not. At length the path grew narrower and narrower, and he turned in desperation and awoke—

woke to see in the dim morning light a dark figure bending over him. He sprang up, and clutched it by the throat.

"A most excellent fellow this!" said the voice of Doctor Mulhaus. "He sends a frantic midnight message for his friend to come to him, regardless of personal convenience and horseflesh; and when this friend comes quietly in, and tries to wake him without disturbing the sick folks, he seizes him by the throat and nearly throttles him."

"I beg a thousand pardons, Doctor," said Tom; "I had been dreaming, and I took you for the devil. I am glad to find my mistake."

"You have good reason," said the Doctor; "but now, how is the patient?"

"Asleep at present, I believe; the housekeeper is with her."

"What is the matter with her?"

"She has had a great blow. It has shaken her intellect, I am afraid."

"What sort of a blow?" asked the Doctor.

Tom hesitated. He did not know whether to tell him or not.

"Nay," said the Doctor, "you had better let me know. I can help then, you know. Now, for instance, has she heard of her husband?"

"She has, Doctor. How on earth came you to guess that?"

“A mere guess, though I have always thought it quite possible, as the accounts of his death were very uncertain.”

Tom then set to work, and told the Doctor all that we know. He looked very grave. “This is far worse than I had thought,” he said, and remained thoughtful.

Mary awoke in a fever and delirious. They kept Charles as much from her as possible, lest she should let drop some hint of the matter to the boy; but even in her delirium she kept her secret well; and towards the evening the Doctor, finding her quieter, saddled his horse, and rode away ten miles to a township, where resided a drunken surgeon, one of the greatest blackguards in the country.

The surgeon was at home. He was drunk, of course; he always was, but hardly more so to-day than usual. So the Doctor hoped for success in his object, which was to procure a certain drug which was neither in the medicine-chest at the Buckleys’ nor at Toonarbin; and putting on his sweetest smile when the surgeon came to the door, he made a remark about the beauty of the weather, to which the other very gruffly responded.

“I come to beg a favour,” said Doctor Mulhaus. “Can you let me have a little—so and so?”

“See you d—d first,” was the polite reply. “A man comes a matter of fourteen thousand miles, makes a pretty little practice, and then gets it cut into by a parcel of ignorant foreigners, whose own country is too hot to

hold them. And not content with this, they have the brass to ask for the loan of a man's drugs. As I said before, I'll see you d—d first, AND THEN I WON'T." And so saying, he slammed the door.

Doctor Mulhaus was beside himself with rage. For the first and last time since I have known him he forgot his discretion, and instead of going away quietly, and treating the man with contempt, he began kicking at the door, calling the man a scoundrel, &c., and between the intervals of kicking, roaring through the keyhole, "Bring out your diploma; do you hear, you impostor?" and then fell to work kicking again. "Bring out your forged diploma, will you, you villain?"

This soon attracted the idlers from the public-house: a couple of sawyers, a shepherd or two, all tipsy, of course, except one of the sawyers, who was drunk. The drunken sawyer at length made out to his own complete satisfaction that Doctor Mulhaus' wife was in labour, and that he was come for the surgeon, who was probably drunk and asleep inside. So, being able to sympathize, having had his wife in the straw every thirteen months regularly for the last fifteen years, he prepared to assist, and for this purpose took a stone about half a hundredweight, and coming behind the Doctor, when he was in full kick, he balanced himself with difficulty, and sent it at the lock with all the force of his arm, and of course broke the door in. In throwing the stone, he lost his balance, came full butt against Dr. Mulhaus,

propelled him into the passage, into the arms of the surgeon, who was rushing out infuriated to defend his property, and down went the three in the passage together, the two doctors beneath, and the drunken sawyer on the top of them.

The drunken surgeon, if, to use parliamentary language, he will allow me to call him so, was of course underneath the others; but, being a Londoner, and consequently knowing the use of his fists, ere he went down delivered a "one, two," straight from the shoulder in our poor dear Doctor's face, and gave him a most disreputable black eye, besides cutting his upper lip open. This our Doctor, being, you must remember, a foreigner, and not having the rules of the British Ring before his eyes, resented by getting on the top of him, taking him round the throat, and banging the back of his head against the brick floor of the passage, until he began to goggle his eyes and choke. Meanwhile the sawyer, exhilarated beyond measure in his drunken mind at having raised a real good promising row, having turned on his back, lay procumbent upon the twain, and kicking everything soft or human he came across with his heels, struck up "The Bay of Biscay, Oh," until he was dragged forth by two of his friends; and, being in a state of wild excitement, ready to fight the world, hit his own mate a violent blow in the eye, and was only quieted by receiving a sound thrashing, and being placed in a sitting posture in the verandah of the public

house, from which he saw Doctor Mulhaus come forth from the surgeon's with rumpled feathers, but triumphant.

I am deeply grieved to have recorded the above scene, but I could not omit it. Having undertaken to place the character of that very noble gentleman, Doctor Mulhaus, before my readers, I was forced not to omit this. As a general rule, he was as self-contained, as calm and as frigid as the best Englishman among us. But under all this there was, to speak in carefully-selected scientific language, a substratum of pepper-box, which has been apparent to me on more than one occasion. I have noticed the above occasion per force. Let the others rest in oblivion. A man so true, so wise, so courteous, and so kindly, needs not my poor excuses for having once in a way made a fool of himself. He will read this, and he will be angry with me for a time, but he knows well that I, like all who knew him, say heartily, God bless you, old Doctor!

But the consequences of the above were, I am sorry to say, eminently disastrous. The surgeon got a warrant against Doctor Mulhaus for burglary with violence, and our Doctor got a warrant against him for assault with intent to rob. So there was the deuce to pay. The affair got out of the hands of the Bench. In fact they sent *both* parties for trial, (what do you think of that, my Lord Campbell?) in order to get rid of the matter, and at sessions, the surgeon swore

positively that Doctor Mulhaus had, assisted by a convict, battered his door down with stones in open day, and nearly murdered him. Then in defence Doctor Mulhaus called the sawyer, who, as it happened, had just completed a contract for fencing for Mrs. Mayford, the proceeds of which bargain he was spending at the public-house when the thing happened, and had just undertaken another for one of the magistrates; having also a large family dependent on him; being, too, a man who prided himself in keeping an eye to windward, and being slightly confused by a trifling attack of *delirium tremens* (diddleums, he called it): he, I say, to our Doctor's confusion and horror, swore positively that he never took a stone in his hand on the day in question; that he never saw a stone for a week before or after that date; that he did not deny having rushed into the passage to assist the complainant (drunken surgeon), seeing him being murdered by defendant; and, lastly, that he was never near the place on the day specified. So it would have gone hard with our Doctor, had not his Honour called the jury's attention to the discrepancies in this witness's evidence; and when Dr. Mulhaus was acquitted, delivered a stinging reproof to the magistrates for wasting public time by sending such a trumpery case to a jury. But, on the other hand, Dr. Mulhaus' charge of assault with intent fell dead; so that neither party had much to boast of.

The night or so after the trial was over, the Doctor

came back to Toonarbin, in what he intended for a furious rage. But, having told Tom Troubridge the whole affair, and having unluckily caught Tom's eye, they two went off into such hearty fits of laughter that poor Mary, now convalescent, but still in bed, knocked at the wall to know what the matter was.

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH IS THE LAST CHAPTER BUT ONE IN THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE state of terror and dismay into which poor Mary Hawker was thrown on finding that her husband, now for many years the *bête noir* of her existence, was not only alive, but promising fairly to cause her more trouble than ever he did before, superadded, let me say, for mere truth's sake, to a slight bilious attack, brought on by good living and want of exercise, threw her into a fever, from which, after several days' delirium, she rose much shattered, and looking suddenly older. All this time the Doctor, like a trusty dog, had kept his watch, and done more, and with a better will than any paid doctor would have been likely to do. He was called away a good deal by the prosecution arising out of that unhappy affair with the other doctor, and afterwards with a prosecution for perjury, which he brought against the sawyer; but he was generally back at night, and was so kind, so attentive, and so skilful that Mary took it into her head, and always affirmed afterwards, that she owed her life to him.

She was not one to receive any permanent impression

from anything. So now, as day by day she grew stronger, she tried to undervalue the mischief which had at first so terrified her, and caused her illness;—tried, and with success, in broad daylight; but, in the silent dark nights, as she lay on her lonely bed, she would fully appreciate the terrible cloud that hung over her, and would weep and beat her pillow, and pray in her wild fantastic way to be delivered from this frightful monster, cut off from communion with all honest men by his unutterable crimes, but who, nevertheless, she was bound to love, honour, and obey, till death should part her from him.

Mrs. Buckley, on the first news of her illness, had come up and taken her quarters at Toonarbin, acting as gentle a nurse as man or woman could desire to have. She took possession of the house, and managed everything. Mrs. Barker, the house-keeper, the only one who did not submit at once to her kindly rule, protested, obstructed, protocolled, presented an ultimatum, and, at last, was so ill advised as to take up arms. There was a short campaign, lasting only one morning,—a decisive battle,—and Mrs. Barker was compelled to sue for peace. “Had Mr. Troubridge been true to himself,” she said, “she would never have submitted;” but, having given Tom warning, and Tom, in a moment of irritation, having told her, without hesitation or disguise, to go to the devil (no less), she bowed to the circumstances, and yielded.

Agnes Buckley encouraged Dr. Mulhaus, too, in his legal affairs, and, I fear, was the first person who proposed the prosecution for perjury against the sawyer: a prosecution, however, which failed, in consequence of his mate and another friend, who was present at the affair, coming forward to the sawyer's rescue, and getting into such a labyrinth and mist of perjury, that the Bench (this happened just after quarter sessions) positively refused to hear anything more on either side. Altogether, Agnes Buckley made herself so agreeable, and kept them all so alive, that Tom wondered how he had got on so long without her.

At the end of three weeks Mary was convalescent; and one day, when she was moved into the verandah, Mrs. Buckley beside her, Tom and the Doctor sitting on the step smoking, and Charles sleepily reading aloud "Hamlet," with a degree of listlessness and want of appreciation unequalled, I should say, by any reader before; at such time, I say, there entered suddenly to them a little-cattle dealer, as brimful of news as an egg of meat. Little Burnside it was: a man about eight stone nothing, who always wore top-boots and other people's clothes. As he came in, Charles recognised on his legs a pair of cord breeches of his own, with a particular grease patch on the thigh: a pair of breeches he had lent Burnside, and which Burnside had immediately got altered to his own size. A good singer was Burnside. A man who could finish his bottle of brandy,

and not go to bed in his boots. A man universally liked and trusted. An honest, hearty, little fellow, yet, one who always lent or spent his money as fast as he got it, and was as poor as Job. The greatest vehicle of news in the district, too. "Snowy river Times," he used to be called.

After the usual greetings, Tom, seeing he was bursting with something, asked him, "What's the news?"

Burnside was in the habit of saying that he was like the Lord Mayor's fool—fond of everything that was good. But his greatest pleasure, the one to which he would sacrifice everything, was retailing a piece of news. This was so great an enjoyment with him that he gloried in dwelling on it, and making the most of it. He used to retail a piece of news, as a perfect novel, in three volumes. In his first he would take care to ascertain that you were acquainted with the parties under discussion; and, if you were not, make you so, throwing in a few anecdotes illustrative of their characters. In his second, he would grow discursive, giving an episode or two, and dealing in moral reflections and knowledge of human nature rather largely. And in his third he would come smash, crash down on you with the news itself, and leave you gasping.

He followed this plan on the present occasion. He answered Tom's question by asking,—

"Do you know Desborough?"

"Of course I do," said Tom; "and a noble good fellow he is."

"Exactly," said Burnside; super of police; distinguished in Indian wars; nephew of my Lord Covetown. An Irishman is Desborough, but far from objectionable."

This by way of first volume: now comes his second:—

"Now, sir, I, although a Scotchman born, and naturally proud of being so, consider that until these wretched national distinctions between the three great nations are obliterated we shall never get on, sir; never. That the Scotch, sir, are physically and intellectually superior——"

"Physically and intellectually the devil," burst in Tom. "Pick out any dozen Scotchmen, and I'll find you a dozen Londoners who will fight them, or deal with them till they'd be glad to get over the borders again. As for the Devon and Cornish lads, find me a Scotchman who will put me on my back, and I'll write you a cheque for a hundred pounds, my boy. We English opened the trade of the world to your little two millions and a-half up in the north there; and you, being pretty well starved out at home, have had the shrewdness to take advantage of it; and now, by Jove, you try to speak small of the bridge that carried you over. What did you do towards licking the Spaniards; eh? And where would you be now, if they had not been licked in 1588, eh? Not in Australia, my boy! A Frenchman is conceited enough, but, by George, he can't hold a candle to a Scotchman."

Tom spoke in a regular passion; but there was some truth in what he said, I think. Burnside didn't like it,

and merely saying, "You interrupt me, sir," went on to his third volume without a struggle.

"You are aware, ladies, that there has been a gang of bushrangers out to the north, headed by a miscreant, whom his companions call Touan, but whose real name is a mystery."

Mrs. Buckley said, "Yes;" and Tom glanced at Mary. She had grown as pale as death, and Tom said, "Courage, cousin; don't be frightened at a name."

"Well, sir," continued Burnside, putting the forefinger and thumb of each hand together, as if he was making "windows" with soapsuds, "Captain Desborough has surprised that gang in a gully, sir, and," spreading his hands out right and left, "obliterated them."

"The devil!" said Tom, while the Doctor got up and stood beside Mary.

"Smashed them, sir," continued Burnside; "extinguished them utterly. He had six of his picked troopers with him, and they came on them suddenly and brought them to bay. You see, two troopers have been murdered lately, and so our men, when they got face to face with the cowardly hounds, broke discipline and wouldn't be held. They hardly fired a shot, but drew their sabres, and cut the dogs down almost to a man. Three only out of twelve have been captured alive, and one of them is dying of a wound in the neck." And, having finished, little Burnside folded his arms and stood in a military attitude, with the air of a man who had done

the thing himself, and was prepared to receive his meed of praise with modesty.

"Courage, Mary," said Tom; "don't be frightened at shadows."—He felt something sticking in his throat, but spoke out nevertheless.

"And their redoubted captain," he asked; "what has become of him?"

"What, Touan himself?" said Burnside. "Well, I am sorry to say that that chivalrous and high-minded gentleman was found neither among the dead nor the living. Not to mince, matters, sir, he has escaped."

The Doctor saw Mary's face quiver, but she bore up bravely, and listened.

"Escaped, has he?" said Tom. "And do they know anything about him?"

"Desborough, who told me this himself," said Burnside, "says no, that he is utterly puzzled. He had made sure of the arch-rascal himself; but, with that remarkable faculty of saving his own skin which he has exhibited on more than one occasion, he has got off for the time, with one companion."

"A companion; eh?"

"Yes," said Burnside, "whereby hangs a bit of romance, if I may profane the word in speaking of such men. His companion is a young fellow, described as being more like a beautiful woman than a man, and bearing the most singular likeness in features to the great Captain Touan himself, who, as you have heard,

is a handsome dog. In short, there is very little doubt that they are father and son."

Tom thought to himself, "Who on earth can this be? What son can George Hawker have, and we not know of it?" He turned to Burnside.

"What age is the young man you speak of?" he asked.

"Twenty, or thereabouts, by all description," said the other.

Tom thought again: "This gets very strange. He could have no son of that age got in Van Diemen's Land: it was eight years before he was free. It must be some one we know of. He had some byeblooms in Devon, by all accounts. If this is one of them, how the deuce did he get here?"

But he could not think. We shall see presently who it was. Now we must leave these good folks for a time, and just step over to Garoopna, and see how affairs go there.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH JAMES BRENTWOOD AND SAMUEL BUCKLEY, ESQUIRES, COMBINE
TO DISTURB THE REST OF CAPTAIN BRENTWOOD, R.A. AND SUCCEED IN
DOING SO.

THE morning after Cecil Mayford had made his unlucky offer to Alice, he appeared at Sam's bedside very early, as if he had come to draw Priam's curtains; and told him shortly, that he had spoken, and had been received with contempt; that he was a miserable brute, and that he was going back home to attend to his business;—under the circumstances, the best thing he could possibly do.

So the field was clear for Sam, but he let matters stay as they were, being far too pleasant to disturb lightly; being also, to tell the truth, a little uncertain of his ground, after poor Cecil had suffered so severely in the encounter. The next day, too, his father and mother went home, and he thought it would be only proper for him to go with them, but, on proposing it, Jim quietly told him he must stay where he was and work hard for another week, and Halbert,

although a guest of the Buckleys, was constrained to remain still at the Brentwoods', in company with Sam.

But at the end of a week they departed, and Jim went back with them, leaving poor Alice behind, alone with her father. Sam turned when they had gone a little way, and saw her white figure still in the porch, leaning in rather a melancholy attitude against the door-post. The audacious magpie had perched himself on the top of her head, from which proud elevation he hurled wrath, scorn, and mortal defiance against them as they rode away. Sam took off his hat, and as he went on kept wondering whether she was thinking of him at all, and hoping that she might be sorry that he was gone. "Probably, however," he thought, "she is only sorry for her brother."

They three stayed at Baroona a week or more, one of them riding up every day to ask after Mary Hawker. Otherwise they spent their time shooting and fishing, and speculating how soon the rains would come, for it was now March, and autumn was fairly due.

But at the end of this week, as the three were sitting together, one of those long-legged, slab-sided, lean, sunburnt, cabbage-tree-hatted lads, of whom Captain Brentwood kept always, say half-a-dozen, and the Major four or five (I should fancy, no relation to one another, and yet so exactly alike, that Captain Brentwood never called them by their right names by any chance); lads who were employed about the stable

and the paddock, always in some way with the horses ; one of those representatives of the rising Australian generation, I say, looked in, and without announcing himself, or touching his hat (an Australian never touches his hat if he is a free man, because the prisoners are forced to), came up to Jim across the drawing-room, as quiet and as self-possessed as if he was quite used to good society, and, putting a letter into his hand, said merely, "Miss Alice," and relapsed into silence, amusing himself by looking round Mrs. Buckley's drawing-room, the like of which he had never seen before.

Sam envied Jim the receipt of that little three-cornered note. He wondered whether there was anything about him in it. Jim read it, and then folded it up again, and said "Hallo !"

The lad,—I always call that sort of individual a lad ; there is no other word for them, though they are of all ages, from sixteen to twenty,—the lad, I say, was so taken up with the contemplation of a blown-glass presse-papier on the table, that Jim had to say, "Hallo there John !"

The lad turned round, and asked in a perfectly easy manner, "What the deuce is this thing for, now ?"

"That," said Jim, "is the button of a Chinese mandarin's hat, who was killed at the battle of Waterloo in the United States by Major Buckley."

"Is it now?" said the lad, quite contented. "It's very pretty; may I take it up?"

"Of course you may," said Jim. "Now, what's the foal like?"

"Rather leggy, *I* should say," he returned. "Is there any answer?"

Jim wrote a few lines with a pencil on half his sister's note, and gave it him. He put it in the lining of his hat, and had got as far as the door, when he turned again. He looked wistfully towards the table where the presse-papier was lying. It was too much for him. He came back and took it up again. What he wanted with it, or what he would have done with it if he had got it, I cannot conceive, but it had taken his simple fancy more, probably, than an emerald of the same size would have done. At last he put it to his eye.

"Why, darn my cabbage-tree," he said, "if you can't see through it! He wouldn't sell it, I suppose, now?"

Jim pursed his lips and shook his head, as though to say that such an idea was not to be entertained, and the lad, with a sigh, laid it down and departed. Then Jim with a laugh threw his sister's note over to Sam. I discovered this very same note only last week, while searching the Buckley papers for information about the family at this period. I have reason to believe that it has never been printed before, and, as far as I know,

there is no other copy extant, so I proceed to give it in full.

“What a dear, disagreeable old Jim you are,” it begins, “to stay away there at Barooka, leaving me moping here with our daddy, who is calculating the explosive power of shells under water at various temperatures. I have a good mind to learn the Differential Calculus myself, only on purpose to bore you with it when you come home.”

“By the bye, Corrella has got a foal. Such a dear little duck of a thing, with a soft brown nose, and sweet long ears, like leaves! Do come back and see it; I am so very, very lonely!”

“I hope Mr. Halbert is pretty well, and that his wound is getting quite right again. Don’t let him undertake cattle-drafting or anything violent. I wish you could bring him back with you, he is such a nice, agreeable creature.”

“Your magpie * has attacked cocky, and pulled a yellow feather out of his crest, which he has planted in the flower-bed, either as a trophy, or to see if it will grow.”

Now this letter is historically important, when taken in connexion with certain dates in my possession. It

* Magpie, a large, pied crow. Of all the birds I have ever seen, the cleverest, the most grotesque, and the most musical. The splendid melody of his morning and evening song is as unequalled as it is indescribable.

was written on a Monday, and Halbert, Jim, and Sam started back to Garoopna the next day, rather a memorable day for Sam, as you will see directly. Now I wish to call attention to the fact, that Sam, far from being invited, is never once mentioned in the whole letter. Therefore what does Miss Burke mean by her audacious calumnies? What does she mean by saying that Alice made love to Sam, and never gave the "poor boy" a chance of escape? Can she, Lesbia, put her hand on her heart and say that she wasn't dying to marry Sam herself, though she was (and is still, very likely) thirty years his senior? The fact is, Lesbia gave herself the airs, and received the privileges of being the handsomest woman in those parts, till Alice came, and put her nose out of joint, for which she never forgave her.

However, to return to this letter. I wonder now, as I am looking at the age-stained paper and faded writing, whether she who wrote it contemplated the possibility of its meeting Sam's eye. I rather imagine that she did, from her provoking silence about him. At any rate, Jim was quite justified in showing him the letter, "for you know," he said, "as there is nothing at all about you in it, there can be no breach of confidence."

"Well!" said Sam, when he had read it.

"Well!" said Jim. "Let us all three ride over and look at the foal."

So they went, and were strictly to be home at dinner time; whereas not one of them came home for a week.

When they came to the door at Garoopna, there was Alice, most bewitchingly beautiful. Papa was away on the run, and Dr. Mulhaus with him; so the three came in. Alice was very glad to see Halbert—was glad also to see Sam; but not so glad, or, at all events, did not say so much about it.

“Alice, have you seen the newspaper?” said Jim.

“No; why?”

“There is a great steamer gone down at sea, and three hundred persons drowned!”*

“What a horrible thing! I should never have courage to cross the sea.”

“You would soon get accustomed to it, I think,” said Halbert.

“I have never even seen it as yet,” she said, “save at a distance.”

“Strange, neither have I,” said Sam. “I have dim recollections of our voyage here, but I never stood upon the shore in my life.”

“I have beat you there,” said Jim. “I have been down to Cape Chatham, and seen the great ocean itself: a very different thing from Sydney Harbour, I promise you. You see the great cape running out a mile into the sea, and the southern rollers tumbling in over the reefs like cascades.”

* Can this be the “President”?—H. K.

“Let us go and see it!—how far is it?” said Alice.

“About thirty miles. The Barkers’ station is about half a mile from the Cape, and we could sleep there, you know.”

“It strikes me as being a most brilliant idea,” said Sam.

And so the arrangement was agreed to, and the afternoon went on pleasantly. Alice walked up and down with Sam among the flowers, while Jim and Halbert lay beneath a mulberry tree and smoked.

They talked on a subject which had engaged their attention a good deal lately: Jim’s whim for going soldiering had grown and struck root, and become a determination. He would go back to India when Halbert did, supposing that his father could be tempted to buy him a commission. Surely he might manage to join some regiment in India, he thought. India was the only place worth living in just now.

“I hope, Halbert,” he said, “that the Governor will consent. I wouldn’t care when I went; the sooner the better. I am tired of being a cattle-dealer on a large scale; I want to get at some *man’s* work. If one thing were settled I would go to-morrow.”

“And what is that?” said Halbert.

Jim said nothing, but looked at the couple among the flower-beds.

“Is that all?” said Halbert. “What will you bet me that that affair is not concluded to-night?”

"I'll bet you five pounds to one it ain't," said Jim; "nor any time this twelvemonth. They'll go on shilly-shallying half their lives, I believe.

"Nevertheless I'll bet with you. Five to one it comes off to-night! Now! There goes your sister into the house; just go in after her."

Jim sauntered off, and Sam came and laid his great length down by the side of Halbert.

They talked on indifferent matters for a few minutes, till the latter said,—

"You are a lucky fellow, Sam."

"With regard to what?" said Sam.

"With regard to Miss Buckley, I mean."

"What makes you think so?"

"Are you blind, Sam? Can't you see that she loves you better than any man in the world?"

He answered nothing, but turning his eyes upon Halbert, gazed at him a moment to see whether he was jesting or no. No, he was in earnest. So he looked down on the grass again, and, tearing little tufts up, said,—

"What earthly reason have you for thinking that?"

"What reason!—fifty thousand reasons. Can you see nothing in her eyes when she speaks to you, which is not there at other times; hey, Bat?—I can, if you can't."

"If I could think so!" said Sam. "If I could find out?"

"When I want to find out anything, I generally ask," said Halbert.

Sam gave him the full particulars of Cecil's defeat.

"All the better for you," said Halbert; "depend upon it. I don't know much about women, it is true, but I know more than you do."

"I wish I knew as much as you do," said Sam.

"And I wish I knew as little as you do," said Halbert.

Dinner-time came, but the Captain and the Doctor were not to the fore. After some speculations as to what had become of them, and having waited an hour, Jim said, that in the unexplained absence of the crowned head, he felt it his duty to the country, to assume the reins of government, and order dinner. Prime Minister Alice, having entered a protest, offered no further opposition, and dinner was brought in.

Young folks don't make so much of dinner as old ones at any time, and this dinner was an unusually dull one. Sam was silent and thoughtful, and talked little; Alice, too, was not quite herself. Jim, as usual, ate like a hero, but talked little; so the conversation was principally carried on by Halbert, in the narrative style, who really made himself very useful and agreeable, and I am afraid they would have been a very "slow" party without him.

Soon after the serious business of eating was over, Jim said,—

"Alice, I wonder what the Governor will say?"

"About what, brother?"

"About my going soldiering."

"Save us! What new crotchet is this?"

"Only that I'm going to bother the Governor, till he gets me a commission in the army."

"Are you really serious, Jim?"

"I never was more so in my life."

"So, Mr. Halbert," said Alice, looking round at him, "you are only come to take my brother away from me!"

"I assure you, Miss Brentwood, that I have only aided and abetted: the idea was his own."

"Well, well, I see how it is;—we were too happy I suppose."

"But, Alice," said Jim, "won't you be proud to see your brother a good soldier?"

"Proud! I was always proud of you. But I wish the idea had never come into your head. If it was in war time I would say nothing, but now it is very different. Well, gentlemen, I shall leave you to your wine. Mr. Halbert, I like you very much, but I wish you hadn't turned Jim's head."

She left them, and walked down the garden; through the twilight among the vines, which were dropping their yellow leaves lightly on the turf before the breath of the autumn evening. So Jim was going,—going to be killed probably, or only coming back after ten years'

absence, "full of strange oaths and bearded like a pard!" She knew well how her father would jump at his first hint of being a soldier, and would move heaven and earth to get him a commission,—yes, he would go—her own darling, funny, handsome Jim, and she would be left all alone.

No, not quite! There is a step on the path behind her that she knows; there is an arm round her waist which was never there before, and yet she starts not as a low voice in her ear says,—

"Alice, my love, my darling, I have come after you to tell you that you are dearer to me than my life, and all the world besides. Can you love me half as well as I love you? Alice, will you be my wife?"

What answer? Her hands pressed to her face, with a flood of happy tears, she only says,—

"Oh! I'm so happy, Sam! So glad, so glad!"

Pipe up there, golden-voiced magpie; give us one song more before you go to roost. Laugh out, old jackass; till you fetch an echo back from the foggy hollow. Up on yon bare boughs, it is dripping, dreary autumn: but down here in the vineyard, are bursting the first green buds of an immortal spring.

There are some scenes which should only be undertaken by the hand of a master, and which, attempted by an apprentice like myself, would only end in disastrous failure, calling down the wrath of all honest men and true critics upon my devoted head,—not undeservedly.

Three men in a century, or thereabouts, could write with sufficient delicacy, and purity to tell you what two such young lovers as Sam Buckley and Alice Brentwood said to one another in the garden that evening, walking up and down between the yellow vines. I am not one of those three. Where Charles Dickens has failed, I may be excused from being diffident. I am an old bachelor, too—a further excuse. But no one can prevent my guessing, and I guess accordingly,—that they talked in a very low tone, and when, after an hour, Alice said it was time to come in, that Sam was quite astonished to find how little had been said, and what very long pauses there had been.

They came in through the window into the sitting-room, and there was Dr. Mulhaus, Captain Brentwood, and also, of all people, Major Buckley, whom the other two had picked up in their ride and brought home. My information about this period of my history is very full and complete. It has come to my knowledge on the best authority, that when Sam came forward to the light, Halbert kicked Jim's shins under the table, and whispered, "You have lost your money, old fellow!" and that Jim answered, "I wish it was ten pounds instead of five."

But old folks are astonishingly obtuse. Neither of the three seniors saw what had happened; but entered *con amore* into the proposed expedition to Cape Chatham, and when bedtime came, Captain Brentwood, honest

gentleman, went off to rest, and having said his prayers and wound up his watch, prepared for a comfortable night's rest, as if nothing was the matter.

He soon found his mistake. He had got his boots off, and was sitting pensively at his bedside, meditating further disrobements, when Jim entered mysteriously, and quietly announced that his whole life in future would be a weary burden if he didn't get a commission in the army, or at least a cadetship in the East India Company's service. Him the Captain settled by telling, that if he didn't change his mind in a month he'd see about it, and so packed him off to bed. Secondly, as he was taking off his coat, wondering exceedingly at Jim's communication, Sam appeared, and humbly and respectfully informed him that he had that day proposed to his daughter and been accepted,—provisionally; hoping that the Captain would not disapprove of him as a son-in-law. He was also rapidly packed off to bed, by the assurance that he (Brentwood) had never felt so happy in his life, and had been sincerely hoping that the young folks would fall in love with one another for a year past.

So, Sam dismissed, the Captain got into bed; but as soon as the light was blown out two native cats began grunting under the washing-stand, and he had to get out, and expel them in his shirt; and finally he lost his temper and began swearing. "Is a man never to get to sleep?" said he. "The devil must be abroad to-night, if ever he was in his life."

No sleep that night for Captain Brentwood. His son, asking for a commission in the army, and his daughter going to be married! Both desirable enough in their way, but not the sort of facts to go to sleep over, particularly when fired off in his ear just as he was lying down. So he lay tossing about, more or less uncomfortable all night, but dozed off just as the daylight began to show more decidedly in the window. He appeared to have slept from thirty to thirty-five seconds, when Jim awoke him with,—

“It’s time to get up, father, if you are going to Cape Chatham to-day.”

“D——n Cape Chatham,” was his irreverent reply when Jim was gone, which sentiment has been often re-echoed by various coasting skippers in later times. “Why, I haven’t been to sleep ten minutes,—and a frosty morning, too. I wish it would rain. I am not vindictive, but I do indeed. Can’t the young fools go alone, I wonder? No; hang it, I’ll make myself agreeable to-day, at all events.”

END OF VOL. II.



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